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ABSTRACT

The four issues of "Skole" published in 1995 include articles examining alternatives to public education and the value of free schools. Free schools offer an unstructured curriculum in which comparisons between students are eliminated and students are empowered to be responsible for their learning. Proponents of this approach to education believe that public schools fail by maintaining the status quo and suppressing student abilities through conformist educational practices. Articles cover the disadvantages and outcomes of compulsory public education; developing a relevant curriculum that encourages critical thinking; home schooling; the political aspects of public education; parent information on child rearing; effective teaching practices; teaching children values; and book and film reviews. Two of the journal issues are devoted to writings and other work by students at the Free School in Albany, New York. These writings represent student learning, creative writing projects, and student educational experiences. (LP)

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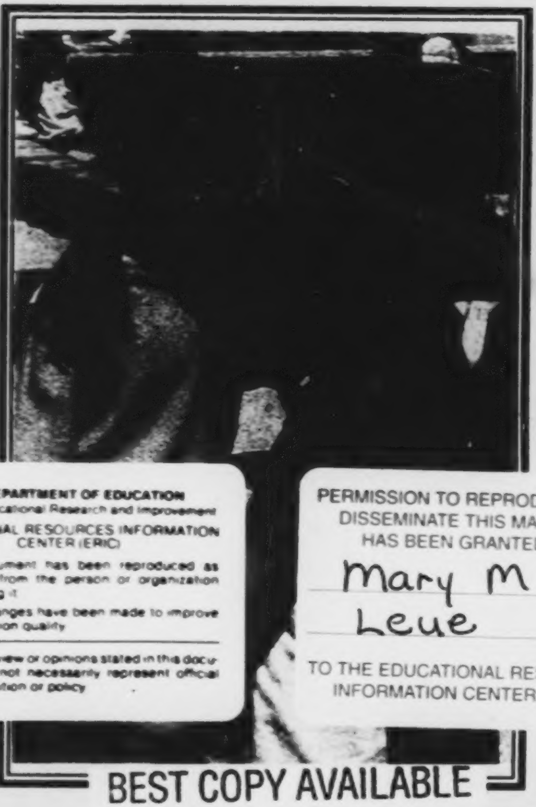
the Journal of Alternative Education



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Winter, 1995 Vol. XII, No. 1

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ΣΚΟΛΕ

the Journal of Alternative Education

Editorial Staff
Ellen Becker
Lawrence Becker
Connie Frisbee Houde
Mary Leue
Betsy Mercogliano
Chris Mercogliano

Advertising Group
Connie Frisbee Houde
Chris Mercogliano

Publisher
Down-to-Earth Books

Photographs
Connie Frisbee Houde
Betsy Mercogliano

Printer
Ed Hamilton, Celecom Corp.
375 Shaker Rd., East Longmeadow, MA 01028

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Editorial and Subscription Address:
72 Philip Street, Albany, NY 12202
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ROUND ROBIN

Guess what! This is to introduce our new editorial staff and format! We're planning to begin publishing ΣΚΟΛΕ on a quarterly basis from now on, each issue devoted to a single theme, and containing a smaller quantity of reading material. The subject of education is too important to be taken lightly, so we hope to enhance the relevance of the new version of ΣΚΟΛΕ to our national family issues. Let us know how you like it! Write us an article!

—Mary Leue

As a mother, a midwife and a woman, I am excited to add my input and thoughts to this great journal that is grappling with the issues of education. Education and creativity have so many forms, just as families and births have many facets—all unique yet sharing a common humanity—I look forward to exploring this with you in ΣΚΟΛΕ.

—Betsy Mercogliano

Hello! I have been a teacher at The Free School in Albany, N.Y. for twenty-one years and co-director for eight. My commitment to children and to furthering our understanding of fundamental life processes like learning and human development appears to be life-long, and joining Mary in bringing you ΣΚΟΛΕ is just a natural extension of that commitment. A frequent contributor to ΣΚΟΛΕ over the past eight years; now as a member of a larger editorial team, I look forward to the opportunity to help make this important journal even more energetic than ever—a tall order, I realize!

—Chris Mercogliano

When I was a kid, I was sure that education occurred only within the four walls of public school beginning at 9 AM and ending at 3 PM. When I wasn't actually enjoying myself in school with something I found exciting on my own terms, the game I and many of my classmates played was to resist as much as possible and to do just enough to get by. Whew! and Wow!

I'm honored to join the editorial staff of ΣΚΟΛΕ, where the institutionalized schemes of education are examined and challenged, innovators in education are given a forum, learning is acknowledged as something that goes on all the time, and children are seen as people.

—Larry Becker

Hello! I'm joining the editorial staff of ΣΚΟΛΕ—and what a privilege it is. ΣΚΟΛΕ is more important than ever in getting out the word about what education can be like. Today, when so many of us (like myself) have been educated in the public school system, and enured to the damage it often routinely does to children's sense of themselves, ΣΚΟΛΕ is filled with articles and individual stories saying, "It doesn't have to be like that." "The child matters more than the system." "It's not that hard." Take a look at the article on fear by Chris if you want to understand more about why we keep thinking it is!

Anyway, here I am and glad to be here.

—Ellen Becker

There was a great deal I loved about school, the learning, the kids, the contact with people other than my family (I lived in a small country town with no kids my age close to where I lived). However I remember being frustrated when I really did want to know something off the beaten path and I was told "You don't have to know that. It's not on the regents (required testing in New York State)."

One thing that I see coming from ΣΚΟΛΕ is articles that deal with the excitement of learning and different ways to capture that element in the learning process. It certainly has taught me that there was so much more that I could have gained in those early years had my "schooling" been different. I am pleased to become a part of a Journal that opens the doors for its readers to all kinds of possibilities for learning and discovery in the broadest sense of the words and because of this can make a difference for our Earth today.

—Connie Frisbee Houde

The new format will actually start with the Spring issue, but since we have a number of new subscribers whose subscriptions start with this issue, we wanted to introduce you to the staff.

This change comes about as a result of the creation—by the six of us—of our new periodical, *The Journal of Family Life*. The widespread acceptance of this new publication has awakened me to the value of making changes which will allow ΣΚΟΛΕ to reach a wider audience through modifying its format from that of a quasi-academic journal to a more popular one. I am hoping the proposed changes will improve reader acessibility.

But whatever we do in the future, there will be six voices making these changes, not one. Hooray for the new staff!

FROM THE SUN *MAGAZINE:*

Twenty-six years of award-winning teaching have led John Gatto to some troubling conclusions about the public schools.

A seventh-grade teacher, Gatto has been named New York City Teacher of the Year and New York State Teacher of the Year. Praised by leaders as diverse as Ronald Reagan and Mario Cuomo, he's a political maverick whose views defy easy categorization.

Gatto is also a local legend on Manhattan's Upper West Side, where he grows garlic, plays chess, writes songs—and once won a Citizen of the Week Award for coming to the aid of a woman who had been robbed. A collection of his essays— **Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum Of Compulsory Schooling** *—was published earlier this year by New Society Publishers.*

Gatto has appeared twice before in The Sun: *"Why Schools Don't Educate" [Issue 175] and "A Few Lessons They Won't Forget" [Issue 186]. Nothing else we've printed has generated as many reprint requests.*

CONFEDERACY OF DUNCES: THE TYRANNY OF COMPULSORY SCHOOLING

by John Taylor Gatto

Let me speak to you about dumbness because that is what schools teach best. Old-fashioned dumbness used to be simple ignorance: you didn't know something, but there were ways to find out if you wanted to. Government-controlled schooling didn't eliminate dumbness—in fact, we now know that people read more fluently before we had forced schooling—but dumbness was transformed.

Now dumb people aren't just ignorant; they're the victims of the non-thought of secondhand ideas. Dumb people are now well-informed about the opinions of *Time* magazine and CBS, *The New York Times* and the President; their job is to choose which pre-thought thoughts, which received

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opinions, they like best. The élite in this new empire of ignorance are those who know the most pre-thought thoughts.

Mass dumbness is vital to modern society. The dumb person is wonderfully flexible clay for psychological shaping by market research, government policymakers, public-opinion leaders, and any other interest group. The more pre-thought thoughts a person has memorized, the easier it is to predict what choices he or she will make. What dumb people cannot do is think for themselves or ever be alone for very long without feeling crazy. That is the whole point of national forced schooling; we aren't supposed to be able to think for ourselves because independent thinking gets in the way of "professional" thinking, which is believed to follow rules of scientific precision.

Modern scientific stupidity masquerades as intellectual knowledge—which it is not. Real knowledge has to be earned by hard and painful thinking; it can't be generated in group discussions or group therapies but only in lonely sessions with yourself. Real knowledge is earned only by ceaseless questioning of yourself and others, and by the labor of independent verification; you can't buy it from a government agent, a social worker, a psychologist, a licensed specialist, or a schoolteacher. There isn't a public school in this country set up to allow the discovery of real knowledge—not even the best ones —although here and there individual teachers, like guerrilla fighters, sabotage the system and work toward this ideal. But since schools are set up to classify people rather than to see them as unique, even the best schoolteachers are strictly limited in the amount of questioning they can tolerate.

The new dumbness—the non-thought of received ideas—is much more dangerous than simple ignorance, because it's really about thought control. In school, a washing away of the innate power of individual mind takes place, a "cleansing" so comprehensive that original thinking becomes difficult. If you don't believe this development was part of the intentional design of schooling, you should read William Torrey Harris's *The Philosophy of Education*. Harris was the U.S. Commissioner of Education at the turn of the century and the man most influential in standardizing our schools. Listen to the man.

"Ninety-nine [students] out of a hundred," writes Harris, "are automata, careful to walk in prescribed paths, careful to follow the prescribed custom." This is not all accident, Harris explains, but the "result of substantial education, which, scientifically defined, is the subsumption of the individual."

Scientific education subsumes the individual until his or her behavior becomes robotic. Those are the thoughts of the most influential U.S. Commissioner of Education we've had so far.

Harris thought, a hundred years ago, that self-alienation was the key to a successful society. Who can say that he was wrong?

The great theological scholar Dietrich Bonhoeffer raised this issue of the new dumbness in his brilliant analysis of Nazism, in which he sought to comprehend how the best-schooled nation in the world, Germany, could fall under its sway. He concluded that Nazism could be understood *only* as the psychological product of good schooling. The sheer weight of received ideas, prethought thoughts, was so overwhelming that individuals gave up trying to assess things for themselves. Why struggle to invent a map of the world or of the human conscience when schools and media offer thousands of ready-made maps, prethought thoughts?

The new dumbness is particularly deadly to middle and upper-middle-class people, who have already been made shallow by the multiple requirements to conform. Too many people, uneasily convinced that they must know something because of a degree, diploma, or license, remain so convinced until a brutal divorce, alienation from their children, loss of employment, or periodic fits of meaninglessness manage to tip the precarious mental balance of their incomplete humanity, their stillborn adult lives.

Listen to William Harris again, the dark genius of American schooling, the man who gave you scientifically age-graded classrooms:

> The great purposes of school can be realized *better* in dark, airless, ugly places than in beautiful halls. It is to master the physical self, to transcend the beauty of nature. School should develop the power to withdraw from the external world.

Harris thought, a hundred years ago, that *self-alienation was the key* to a successful society. Filling the young mind with the thoughts of others and surrounding it with ugliness—that was the passport to self-alienation. Who can say that he was wrong?

II

I want to give you a yardstick, a gold standard, by which to measure good schooling. The Shelter Institute in Bath, Maine will teach you how to build a three thousand square-foot, multi-level Cape Cod home in three weeks' time, whatever your age. If you stay another week, it will show you how to make your own posts and beams; you'll actually cut them out and set them up. You'll learn wiring, plumbing, insulation, the works. Twenty thousand people have learned how to build a house there for about the cost of one month's tuition in public school. (Call Patsy Hennon at 207/442-7938, and she'll get you started on building your own home.)

For just about the same money you can walk down the street in Bath to the Apprentice Shop at the Maine Maritime Museum [*now in Rockport—ed.*] and sign on for a one-year course (no vacations, forty hours a week) in traditional wooden boat building. The whole tuition is eight hundred dollars, but there's a catch: they won't accept you as a student until you volunteer for two weeks, so they can get to know you and you can judge what it is you're getting into. Now you've invested thirteen months and fifteen hundred dollars and you have a house and a boat. What else would you like to know? How to grow food, make clothes, repair a car, build furniture, sing? Those of you with a historical imagination will recognize Thomas Jefferson's prayer for schooling—that it would teach useful knowledge. Some places do: the best schooling in the United States today is coming out of museums, libraries, and private institutes. If anyone wants to school your kids, hold them to the standard of the Shelter Institute and you'll do fine.

As long as we're questioning public schooling, we should question whether there really is an abstraction called "the public" at all, except in the ominous calculations of social engineers. As a boy from the banks of the Monongahela River in western Pennsylvania, I find the term insulting, a cartoon of social reality. If an institution that robs people of their right to self-determination can call itself "public", if being "public" means it can turn families into agents of the state, making parents spy on and harass their sons and daughters because a schoolteacher tells them to; if the state can steal your home because you can't pay its "public" school taxes, and state courts can break up your family if you refuse to allow the state to tell your children what to think—then the word *public* is a label for garbage and for people who allow themselves to be treated like slaves.

A few weeks is all that the Shelter Institute asks for to give you a beautiful Cape Cod home; a few months is all Maine Maritime asks for to teach you boat-building and rope-making, lobstering and sail-making, fishing and naval architecture. We have too much schooling, not too little. Hong Kong, with its short school year, whips Japan in every scientific or mathematical competition. Israel, with its long school year, can't keep up with Flemish Belgium, which has the shortest school year in the world.

Somebody's been lying to you. Sweden, a rich, healthy, and beautiful country, with a spectacular reputation for quality in everything, won't *allow* children to enter school before they're seven years old. The total length of Swedish schooling is nine years, not twelve, after which the average Swede runs circles around the over-schooled American. Why don't you know these things? To whose advantage is it that you don't?

When students enroll in a Swedish school, the authorities ask three questions: (1) Why do you want to go to this school? (2) What do you want to gain from the experience? (3) What are you interested in?

And they listen to the answers. Can you build a house or a boat? Can you grow food, make clothing, dig a well, sing a song (your own song, that is), make your own children happy, weave a whole life from the everyday world around you? No, you say, you can't? Then listen to me—you have no business with my kid.

In my own life, with my own children, I'm sorry I lacked the courage to say what Hester Prynne, the wearer of the scarlet letter, said to the Puritan elders when they tried to take away her daughter. Alone and friendless, dirt poor, ringed about by enemies, she said, *"Over my dead body."* A few weeks ago a young woman called me from Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania to tell me the state had just insisted she stop home-schooling her little girl, Chrissie. The state was going to force her to send Chrissie to school. She said she was going to fight, first with the law, although she didn't know where the money would come from, and then by any means she had. If I had to bet on this young, single mother or the State of Pennsylvania to win, I'd bet on the lady because what I was really hearing her say was, "Over my dead body." I wish I'd been able to say that when the state came to take my own children. I didn't. But if I'm born again I promise you that's what I will say.

A few days ago I got a call from a newspaper that wanted some advice for parents about how to launch their children into school. All the reporter wanted was a sound byte from a former New York State Teacher of the Year. What I said was this:

> Don't cooperate with your children's school unless the school has come to you in person to work out a meeting of the minds—on your turf, not theirs. Only a desperado would blindly trust his children to a collection of untested strangers and hope for the best. Parents and school personnel are just plain natural adversaries. One group is trying to make a living; the other is trying to make a work of art called a family. If you allow yourself to be co-opted by flattery, seduced with worthless payoffs such as special classes or programs, intimidated by Alice in Wonderland titles and degrees, you will become the enemy within, the extension of state schooling into your own home. Shame on you if you allow that. Your job is to educate, the schoolteacher's is to school; you work for love, the teacher for money. The interests are radically different, one an individual thing, the other a collective. You can make your own son or daughter one of a kind if you have the time and *will* to do so; school can only make them part of a hive, a herd, or an anthill.

III

How did I survive for nearly thirty years in a system for which I feel such disgust and loathing? I want to make a confession in the hope it will suggest strategy to other teachers: I did it by becoming an active saboteur, in small ways and large. What I did resolutely was to teach kids what I'm saying here—that schooling is bad business unless it teaches you how to build a boat or a house; that giving strangers intimate information about yourself is certainly to their advantage, but seldom to your own.

On a daily basis I consciously practiced sabotage, breaking laws regularly, forcing the fixed times and spaces of schooling to become elastic, falsifying records so the rigid curricula of those places could be what individual children needed. I threw sand in the gears by encouraging new teachers to think dialectically so that they wouldn't fit into the pyramid of administration. I exploited the weakness of the school's punitive mechanism,*which depends on fear to be effective,* by challenging it in visible ways, showing I did not fear it, setting administrators against each other to prevent the juggernaut from crushing me. When that didn't work I recruited community forces to challenge the school—businessmen, politicians, parents, and journalists—so I would be given a wide berth. Once, under heavy assault, I asked my wife to run for school board. She got elected, fired the superintendent, and then punished his cronies in a host of imaginative ways.

But what I am *most* proud of is this: *I undermined the confidence of the young in the school institution and replaced it with confidence in their own minds and hearts.* I thumbed my nose at William Torrey Harris and gave to my children (although I was well into manhood before I shook off the effects of my own schooling) what had been given to me by the green river Monongahela and the steel city of Pittsburgh: love of family, friends, culture, and neighborhood, and a cup overflowing with self-respect. I taught my kids how to cheat destiny so successfully that they created a record of astonishing success that deserves a book someday. Some of my kids left school to go up the Amazon and live with Indian tribes to study on their own the effects of government dam-building on traditional family life; some went to Nicaragua and joined combat teams to study the amazing hold of poetry on the lives of common people in that land; some made award-winning movies; some became comedians; some succeeded at love, some failed. All learned to argue with Fate in the form of social engineering.

The sheer craziness of what we do to our children should have been sufficient cause to stop it once the lunacy was manifest in increased social pathology, but a crucial development forestalled corrective action: schooling became the biggest business of all. Suddenly there were jobs, titles, careers, prestige, and contracts to protect. As a country we've never had the luxury of a political or a religious or a cultural consensus. As a synthetic state, we've had only economic consensus: unity is achieved by making everyone want to get rich, or making them envy those who are.

Once a splendid economic machine like schooling was rolling, only a madman would try to stop it or to climb off its golden ascent. True, its jobs didn't seem to pay much (although its contractors *did* and *do* make fortunes), but upon closer inspection they paid more than most. And the security for the obedient was matchless because the institution provided the best insurance that a disturbing social mobility (characteristic of a frontier society) could finally be checked. Horace Mann, Henry Barnard, William Harris, Edward Thorndike, William James, John Dewey, Stanley Hall, Charles Judd, Ellwood Cubberly, James Russell—all the great schoolmen of American history—made endless promises to industrialists and old-line American families of prominence that if the new Prussian scheme were given support, prospects of a revolution here would vanish. (What a great irony that in a revolutionary nation the most effective motivator of leadership was the guarantee that another one could be prevented!)

Schools would be the insurance policy for a new industrial order which, as an unfortunate by-product of its operations, would destroy the American family, the small farmer, the landscape, the air, the water, the religious base of community life, the time-honored covenant that Americans could rise and fall by their own efforts. This industrial order would destroy democracy itself, and the promise held out to common men and women that if they were ever backed into a corner by their leaders, they might change things overnight at the ballot box.

I hope you can see now that this Prussian theory of workplaces and schools isn't just some historical oddity, but is necessary to explain customary textbook structure and classroom procedures, which fly in the face of how people actually learn. It explains the inordinate interest the foundations of Rockefeller and Carnegie took in shaping early compulsory schooling around a standardized factory model, and it sheds light on many mysterious aspects of modern American culture: for instance, why, in a democracy, can't citizens be *automatically* registered at birth to vote, once and for all?

Compulsory schooling has been, from the beginning, a scheme of indoctrination into the new concept of mass man, an important part of which was the creation of a proletariat. According to Auguste Comte (surely the godfather of scientific schooling), you could create a useful proletariat class by breaking connections between children and their families, their communities, their God, and themselves. Remember William Harris's belief that self-alienation was the key to successful schooling! Of course it is. These connections have to be broken to create a dependable citizenry because, if left alive, the loyalties they foster are unpredictable and unman-ageable. People who maintain such relationships often say, "Over my dead body." How can states operate that way?

Well-schooled people, like schoolbooks, are very much alike. Propagandists have known for a century that school-educated people are easier to lead than ignorant people.

Think of government schooling as a vast behavior clinic designed to create a harmless proletariat, the most important part of which is a professional proletariat of lawyers, doctors, engineers, managers, government people, and schoolteachers. This professional proletariat, more homeless than the poor and the sub-poor, is held hostage by its addiction to luxury and security, and by its fear that the licensing monopoly might be changed by any change in governance. The main service it renders—advice—is contaminated by self interest. We are all dying from it, the professional proletariat faster than anyone. It is their children who commit literal suicide with such regularity, not the children of the poor. ...

IV

...In 1926, Bertrand Russell said casually that the United States was the first nation in human history to deliberately deny its children the tools of critical thinking; actually Prussia was first, we were second. The school edition of *Moby Dick* asked all the right questions, so I had to throw it away. Real books don't do that. They let readers actively participate with their own questions. Books that show you the best questions to ask aren't just stupid, they hurt the intellect under the guise of helping it, just as standardized tests do.

Well-schooled people, like schoolbooks, are very much alike. Propagandists have known for a century that school-educated people are easier to lead than ignorant people—as Dietrich Bonhoeffer confirmed in his studies of Nazism.

It's very useful for some people that our form of schooling tells children what to think about, how to think about it, and when to think about it. It's very useful to some groups that children are trained to be dependent on experts, to react to titles instead of judging the real men and women who hide behind the titles. It isn't very healthy for families and neighborhoods, cultures and religions. But then school was never about those things anyway: that's why we don't have them around anymore. You can thank government schooling for that.

V

I think it would be fair to say that the overwhelming majority of people who make schools work today are unaware *why* they fail to give us successful human beings, no matter how much money is spent or how much good will is expended on reform efforts. This explains the inevitable temptation to find villains and to cast blame-- on bad teaching, bad parents, bad children, or penurious taxpayers.

The thought that school may be a brilliantly conceived social engine that works *exactly* as it was designed to work and produces *exactly* the human products it was designed to produce establishes a different relation to the usual demonologies. Seeing school as a triumph of human ingenuity, as a glorious success, forces us to consider whether we *want* this kind of success, and if not, to envision something of value in its place. And it forces us to challenge whether there is a "we," a national consensus sufficient to justify looking for one right way rather than dozens or even hundreds of right ways. I don't think there is.

VI

Museums and institutes of useful knowledge travel a different road than schools. Consider the difference between librarians and schoolteachers. Librarians are custodians of real books and real readers; schoolteachers are custodians of schoolbooks and indentured readers. Somewhere in the difference is the Rosetta Stone that reveals how education is one thing, schooling another.

Begin with the setting and social arrangement of a library. The ones I've visited all over the country invariably are comfortable and quiet, places where you can read rather than just pretend to read. How important this silence is. Schools are never silent.

People of all ages work side by side in libraries, not just a pack of age-segregated kids. For some reason, libraries do not segregate by age nor do they presume to segregate readers by questionable tests of reading ability. Just as the people who decoded the secrets of farming or of the forests and oceans were not segregated by age or test scores, the library seems to have intuited that common human judgment is adequate to most learning decisions.

The librarian doesn't tell me what to read, doesn't tell me the sequence of reading I have to follow, doesn't grade my reading. Librarians act as if they trust their customers. The librarian lets me ask my own questions and helps me when I need help, not when the library decides I need it. If I feel like reading in the same place all day long, that seems to be OK with the library. It doesn't tell me to stop reading at regular intervals by ringing a bell in my ear. The library keeps its nose out of my home, too. It doesn't send letters to my mother reporting on my library behavior; it doesn't make recommendations or issue orders on how I should use my time spent outside of the library.

The library doesn't have a tracking system. Everyone is mixed together there, and no private files exist detailing my past victories and defeats as a patron. If the books I want are available, I get them by requesting them—even if that deprives some more gifted reader, who comes a minute later. The library doesn't presume to determine which of us is more qualified to read that book; it doesn't play favorites. It is a very class-blind, talent-blind place, appropriately reflecting our historic political ideals in a way that puts schools to shame.

The public library isn't into public humiliation the way schools seem to be. It never posts ranked lists of good and bad readers for all to see. Presumably it considers good reading its own reward, not requiring additional accolades, and it has resisted the temptation to hold up good reading as a moral goad to bad readers. One of the strangest differences between libraries and schools, in New York City at least, is that you almost never see a kid behaving badly in a library or waving a gun there—even though bad kids have exactly the same access to libraries as good kids do. Bad kids seem to respect libraries, a curious phenomenon which may well be an unconscious response to the automatic respect libraries bestow blindly on everyone. Even people who don't like to read like libraries from time to time; in fact, they are such generally wonderful places I wonder why we haven't made them compulsory—and all alike, of course, too.

Here's another angle to consider: the library never makes predictions about my general future based on my past reading habits, nor does it hint that my days will be happier if I read Shakespeare rather than Barbara Cartland. The library tolerates eccentric reading habits because it realizes that free men and women are often very eccentric.

And finally, the library has real books, not schoolbooks. Its volumes are not written by collective pens or picked by politically correct screening committees. Real books conform only to the private curriculum of each writer, not to the invisible curriculum of some German collective agenda. The one exception to this is children's books—but no sensible child ever reads those things, so the damage from them is minimal.

Real books are deeply subversive of collectivization. They are the best known way to escape herd behavior, because they are vehicles transporting their reader into deep caverns of absolute solitude where nobody else can visit: No two people ever read the same great book. Real books disgust the totalitarian mind because they generate uncontrollable mental growth—and it cannot be monitored! Television has entered the classroom because it is a collective mechanism and, as such, much superior to textbooks; similarly, slides, audio tapes, group games, and so on meet the need to collectivize, which is a central purpose of mass schooling. This is the famous "socialization" that schools do so well. Schoolbooks, on the other hand, are paper tools that reinforce school routines of close-order drill, public mythology, endless surveillance, global ranking, and constant intimidation.

That's what the questions at the end of chapters are designed to do, to bring you back to a reality in which you are subordinate. Nobody really expects you to answer those questions, not even the teacher; they work their harm solely by being there. That is their genius. Schoolbooks are a crowd-control device. Only the very innocent and well-schooled see any difference between good ones and bad ones; both kinds do the same work. In that respect they are much like television programming, the function of which, as a plug in narcotic, is infinitely more powerful than any trivial differences between good programs and bad.

Real books educate, schoolbooks school, and thus libraries and library policies are a major clue to the reform of American schooling. When you take the free will and solitude out of education it becomes schooling. You can't have it both ways.

[This article is excerpted from the text of a speech Gatto delivered several years ago at the University of Texas in Austin. first published in* The Sun. *A friend from Texas sent it to me. Ed.]

Dear Mary,

If the enclosed article is of any interest, you are welcome to use it, or any part of it, in ΣΚΟΛΕ. It is a modified version of the second chapter of my M.A. thesis for Antioch University, which was entitled 'Radical Alternatives in Japanese Education: Kinokuni Children's Village and A. S. Neill'.

Another version of the same article has just been published in Japanese translation here as part of a collection of essays on school entitled 'Gakko to iu Kosaten' (or 'Crossroads for School'). Shinichiro Hori's school, Kinokuni, continues to thrive here and has recently expanded to include a junior high school, so I am visiting the school from time to time as well as carrying on with my college teaching work. . .

All the best from me,
John Potter

JAPAN'S EDUCATION: A TIME FOR CHANGE

by John Potter

In countries such as Britain, the Japanese education system is sometimes held up as a paragon of virtue as it is seen as contributing greatly to the over-all success of the nation and its economic rise since the Second World War. It is well-known that literacy levels are now virtually 100%, the Japanese score high on measures of mathematical ability, and large numbers of students in Japan go on to further education. However, as Tadahiko Inagaki has pointed out:

> The criteria for cross-cultural comparison, particularly concerning the quality of education and its social and sociopsychological background, must be broadened to include intracultural difficulties and problems. When used by persons outside a culture, criteria for comparison often tend to focus on the outcomes of education or its surface features rather than on the processes and the problems lying beneath the surface. (Inagaki, *School Education: Its History and Contemporary Status, in Azuma,* 1986, p.89).

Steven Platzer's introduction to Teruhisa Horio's book *Educational Thoughtt and Ideology in Modern Japan* puts it like this:

> Those who want the nations of the West to strive to meet what has been called "the Japanese educational challenge" are implicitly making powerful claims about the ways in which we should be preparing our children to meet the problems of the twenty-first century. But would one listen to a doctor who showed little concern for the negative effects of the medicine he was prescribing? (in *Horio*, 1988, pp . XI-XII) .

Some of these problems will be mentioned later, though to go into all the details concerning the current debate about Japanese education would, of course, require a much longer investigation than this. As a British teacher, my interest is in the ideas of foreign radicals in education and in how some of their ideas might be accepted into all levels of Japanese schooling. In order to gain some understanding of the situation in which potential radicals in education in Japan might find themselves, it is first necessary to look, however briefly, at something of the history of Japanese education and then at some features that underlie education in Japan. Some of the outcomes of the problems in Japanese schools will then be illustrated and finally there will be some comments on education and schooling in both Britain and Japan.

Historical

In Britain, provision for a universal system of education was first introduced in 1870—in Japan, the first moves towards a compulsory system of education were made at almost the same time, in 1872. Following the Meiji restoration of 1868, when the feudal ruling class were ousted, the leaders of the new government were anxious to catch up with the other industrial nations following three hundred years of seclusion policy. Hori writes:

In 1872 it was stipulated by the Fundamental Code that every child at the age of six should start at least four years of primary schooling. Despite every resistance by the parents (including the destruction of school buildings) the system of popular education steadily developed and reached 50% attendance in ten years (needless to say, schools had more boys than girls).

European technology was introduced with enthusiasm, and people came to realize that in such times education would bring more opportunities for entry to the social elites. Although for economic reasons very few parents could send their children to upper schools, the idea of education as the means of social success took root deeply and has been transmitted up to the present day. As may be easily presumed, greater importance was put upon absorbing and memorizing than upon expressing and creating. (Hori, *A. S. Neill and Education in Japan*, 1982, pp.2-3)

The Herbartian five-steps method was used to teach subjects— even in morals and art—and this concept of formal steps shaped in considerable detail the teachers' instructional procedures. During this early time of compulsory education the imperial court began to increase its own influence and in 1890 the Imperial Rescript on Education set forth principles which continued to guide education until 1945. The traditional Confucian values were maintained and a body of essential knowledge and basic skills was introduced into the schools. The emperor became the core of national unity and under the Rescript it was stipulated that Japanese should devote themselves to the prosperity of the Divine Lane by hard study and by respecting the emperor as the 'great and charitable father of the nation'. Despite a climate of rigid and centralized authority where more free ideas in education might be thought to have been unknown, the names of some foreign educational innovators do appear. Before the implementation of the original system of universal schooling was adopted, a special committee researched into the organization of education in other countries and the influence of the United States on the new system of education was especially dominant.

Inagaki mentions that Pestalozzi's ideas were popular in the U.S.A. at that time and that early lessons and methods of group instruction were largely derived from his views.

But by the 1890s there had arisen some criticism of the increasingly rigid and formal pedagogical procedures. Foreign educational trends and movements such as the New Education Movement were eventually championed by many and John Dewey's ideas, along with such innovations as the Gary Plan, Dalton Plan and Project Method became popular. The 1920s was an especially fruitful time and new schools thrived which featured degrees of child-centredness, self-activity and flexible curricula. Many schools, though by no means all, were in the domain of the private sector in big cities and in what is known as 'laboratory' or experimental schools affiliated with the normal schools or with universities.

Inagaki states that the government eventually formally prohibited the use of these new child-centred concepts which it saw as a danger to existing educational practice. However, following the war and the American occupation of Japan, a new system of educational provision was instituted in 1947 which, this time, was based largely on the American model. Dewey's ideas again became popular but Shimahara notes:

> The historic reform designed by the United States Education Mission required a revolutionary change in Japanese philosophic orientation. Experimentalism, with which John Dewey's philosophy was generally identified, was the most influential underlying orientation of the new education in Japan. A major problem confronted by progressive college professors and other leaders in the postwar education, therefore, was to translate experimentalism, developed on foreign soil, into the radically different matrix of Japanese culture.

(Shimahara, *Adaptation and Education in Japan*, 1979, P.66).

By 1950 Japanese educators were expressing some dissatisfaction with Deweyan methods which 'did not work in Japanese culture' and by 1952 the experimental methods were under heavy attack.

And so the new emphasis in education lasted for only a short period following the war. Liberal teachers were purged and the teachers' union was seen as a dangerous enemy by the government and the ruling class. A detailed course of study was imposed with the aim of national conformity and all schools were forced to use only the textbooks compiled under the government's approval and supervision. Moral training was emphasized and little room for diversity or the following of individual interests was allowed, especially after 1960 when the rapid increase in enrollment at high schools and universities and its accompanying fierce competition for entrance led to even more stringent and formal teachercentred schooling.

The merciless situation which resulted from the imposition of this course of study was too much for the majority of students to cope with and this, in turn, resulted in a dramatic increase in numbers attending juku (cram schools). The juku's purpose gradually changed until it eventually came to be largely concerned with helping students to prepare for entrance examinations to high schools and universities. Competitive exams have contributed so much to the growth of the juku that it is now viewed by many as an integral part of the Japanese system. In 1980 the government introduced its new course of study in which the academic content was slightly reduced and 'Free Hours' were included. This refers to time for study left to the discretion of each school a trivial reform which was even, sadly, opposed by the Headmasters Association.

Over the past ten years

there has been some relaxation of the punishing system although its effects have been marginal. A main change has been the introduction of the new course of study which includes the introduction of the new integrated course in life environment studies for the first two grades of primary school. This is intended to combat, to some extent, the rigidity in Japanese schools and to promote a more creative atmosphere as, even in these early years, pupils are offered little chance to follow their own interests or to show initiative. This can be seen as a very small beginning for an alternative to the prevailing situation in education as the Ministry of Education grapples with the problems produced by the intense pressures of their schooling system. More recently, the Ministry has also relented in allowing pupils to attend schools which are unauthorized, and in the state schools a measure of freedom is being permitted in the arrangement of timetables. A climate has now been created in which recognition can be given to an independent school such as Kinokuni Children's Village in Wakayama, which is based on a combination of the ideas of Neill and Dewey and which claims to offer a radical alternative to all other accepted Japanese schools.

Some Features of Japanese Education

Cummings (in his study *Education and Equality in Japan,* 1980) found many good things to say about the primary schools he visited in Kyoto. In addition to the general equality he found there, he praises the orderliness of schools, standards in basic skills and teaching in arts and music. However, Rohlen (*Japan's High Schools,* 1983), while acknowledging Cummings' arguments, seriously disagrees with him about the overall character of Japanese education. A visitor from Britain would certainly find, after perhaps the initial surprise of lively, sometimes noisy, primary school classrooms, a marked difference from British primary schools.

Apart from the larger class sizes in Japan, the idea of project work, or group and individual activity, seems much less in evidence and the predominant classroom activity is whole class teaching in specific subject periods directed by the teacher. Even in the experimental school attached to Nara Women's University, which I visited in 1992, the whole class method of instruction divided into subjects was predominant, although an element of child-centredness was allowed and an absence of standard textbooks not possible in more 'normal' schools. In adopting the new life environment studies a small step towards a somewhat freer approach has become possible. Ironically, this is happening at a time when, with the passing of the Education Reform Act of 1988, British education is being rapidly pushed towards less progressive and more traditional ways of teaching, following what the government sees as the failure of free education.

Horio has viewed the lack of success of radical or progressive ideas in education in Japan, despite the adoption of some of them earlier this century, from a political perspective. Shimahara, however, has emphasized the cultural difficulties in the failure of innovations in Japan. However, both the political and the cultural are interdependent and neither can be singled out as the sole reason for slowness to change. In looking at the historical background of Japanese education it can be seen that political pressures were an important factor in stifling the new schools which sprang up in the earlier part of the century, and in more recent times the intensely competitive entrance examination system has hung like a dark shadow over all schooling. There have also, though, been a number of characteristics within Japanese society and thinking itself which have contributed to a reluctance to experiment with anything radically different.

The British visitor to the Japanese school would perhaps most of all be initially struck by the regimentation involved in the everyday lives of the pupils. At all ages—including, sometimes, even pre-school level—there can be found an almost militaristic uniformity in the way that pupils and teachers prepare and organize their days so that the details leave little room for variation or spontaneity. Group thinking and routines instill habits of diligence and conformity which are considered essential for the development of the pupil. The group oriented nature of Japanese society is reflected in the fact that poor performance is not excused in Japan by a supposed lack of ability or by social background, as would frequently be the case in Britain. The recent report published by the HMSO on elementary schools in Japan found that:

> The pervasive attitudes are that hard work leads to success, and endeavour matched to thorough teaching leads to ability. It follows that concerns for individual differences or even the recognition that marked differences may exist in pupils' abilities are far less pressing in Japan than in England and Scotland. From an early stage Japanese pupils find themselves in a powerful group culture in which the teaching and, indeed, the social dynamics of the school are very much geared to everyone achieving common goals. (*Teaching and Learning in Japanese Elementary Schools*, 1992, p.21).

Because of the need for all pupils to progress together and the general lack of acceptance of marked differences in ability, a large number of pupils who fall behind in their studies are sent to juku where they spend a considerable amount of time trying to catch up.

Meanwhile, many others go to juku in order to get further ahead in the race for entry to the next school, thus further exacerbating the problem. Rohlen found, in fact, that despite the appearance of an egalitarian education system and a general uniformity of background and aspirations, the differences that do exist in family background were more important than any other factor in determining which high school children eventually enter.

The same HMSO report, while finding some positive things to say about the elementary schools was unable to excuse the existence of juku. My own experience in conversations were very much borne out by their findings in discussion with parents of elementary school children:

Several parents said, for example, that their 10 and 11 year old children got up at around 6.00 am to prepare for school and together with school homework and juku classes they would not complete their work until 9 or 10 o'clock at night. They also attended weekend classes so that a seven-day working week was not unusual for some elementary school children. An indication of the toll taken on some children was seen in a juku where on a Friday evening a child aged 7 was fast asleep over his workbook while the class continued to work around him. Many of the pupils said they disliked attending the juku but they, like their parents, were resolved to make the best of it. (op. cit. p.17).

Such a punishing regimen is unlikely to ease greatly during the school holidays when juku continues and when the normal school will assign various activities and instructions for the pupils' holiday work.

The demands on parents to support their children throughout their schooling are somewhat greater than would be expected from a British family and most parents in Japan are prepared to invest a good deal of time, energy and money in promoting their children's academic success from a very early age. Although elementary education is provided as a 'free' service, parents are required to contribute much more for resources than has been the case in Britain. The Japanese family will be financially responsible for such things as notebooks and exercise books, for writing and mathematical equipment, as well as for a variety of miscellaneous additional expenses.

The freer schools of the 1920s and the post-war experiments did not take permanent hold in Japanese education and despite all the pressures on children and parents today and the problems that have arisen there is no new evidence that there is a general movement to sweep away the conformist system. In touching on this, both

White (*The Japanese Educational Challenge*, 1987) and Inagaki have referred to the popular book *Totto-chan: The Little Girl at the Window* by Tetsuko Kuroyanagi. This best-seller of childhood reminiscences sold over six million copies in Japan following its original publication in 1981. Tomoe Gakuen, the school described in the book, was one of the last of the freer schools to close, in 1944. Totto-chan's school had inherited many of the freer principles of the New Education Movement from the early part of this century. Both White and Inagaki see the success of the book with Japanese people as a kind of longing or nostalgic dream of education which is in contrast to the harsh pressures and formality which today's children are facing. White points out, however, that the theme of the book is the love and care that is lavished upon the children at the school—there is no element suggested of the children's development as individuals as a Western reader might expect. Faced with the difficulties of the entrance examination system, the modern Japanese parent may bemoan the situation but, at the same time, any freedom desired is more likely to be that of a benevolent authority—one that when the time comes will insist that individual growth be sacrificed for 'success':

In short, Japanese parents want schools to be supportive and caring, but they do not want a school to become a place where idiosyncrasy is encouraged. It falls to the media to decry conformism and "the quality-control managers called teachers who...treat students like cucumbers: bent cucumbers are difficult to pack with straight ones; thus idiosyncratic cucumbers are seen as abnormal." This is not a live issue for most parents. (White, op. cit. p.178).

Shimahara also notes the contradiction in parental attitudes in his case study of three schools in Nagoya (included in *Adaptation and Education in Japan*). He found that parents said they wanted their children to be individual and creative but were, in fact, mainly concerned with getting them into college. In addition, the stated aims of the schools themselves frequently mention such things as the fostering of individual growth and personal development, but, in reality, their almost exclusive consideration is with preparation for entrance examinations. This was even the case at the 'experimental' high school attached to Nagoya University. Students and parents there were found to be much more interested in examination techniques than in substantive learning and growth.

This kind of obsession with entrance exams inevitably determines to a significant degree the kind of education offered to all ages throughout the school system and so it is not possible to isolate one area of schooling for investigation without considering factors which impinge throughout education at all levels. Also, an unfair economic element enters here as entrance exams give an advantage to those who can afford to prepare intensively for the exams. As Thomas writes, "the affluent in Japan are able to buy educational advantages for their children". (*Japan: The Blighted Blossom*, 1989, p. 96). In this, of course, Japan is not fundamentally any different from Britain or most other countries.

It would seem that the kind of freedom envisaged for schools by radicals such as A.S. Neill—a man who once wrote that "childhood is playhood"—is something that most parents could hardly imagine and would certainly not find desirable. The idea of children having any rights at school is also one that has still to take proper hold. The students themselves, despite some signs of dissent, in the main try to follow the systems demands as they have little choice in such a competitive and conformist society. In fact, in attitude studies quoted by White with students from many countries, the Japanese scored highest in 'liking school'. In my own informal interviews and conversations with a large number of female Japanese junior college students it was also found that a majority had warm feelings about their previous school life. However, on closer questioning the reasons for this were often more ambivalent. Friendships and outside activities were most frequently cited as reasons for liking school, while lessons, rules and restrictions were most commonly disparaged.

Some Outcomes

Despite the resignation of most parents and children to the existing system of education, there have been a large number of problems which have sometimes had disastrous results for the individuals involved and their families. Anxieties of children, parents and teachers have all led to outcomes including truancy, school violence, bullying, and suicide.

As White has commented, it is the media who mainly highlight the casualties that result from the system of education. In a series of articles on education the *Asahi Shimbun* reported (4th May 1992) that 60% of the thirteen year olds they surveyed in Osaka studied from four to six hours after school every day. Many of them began going to juku when they were nine or ten years old. One quarter of these children said that they were frequently tired. Not surprisingly perhaps, the sales of stamina drinks produced specifically for children had doubled in the previous five years.

The outcome of the system is sometimes death. In March 1991, the parents of a thirteen year old boy, who had hanged himself in a public toilet after what appeared to be a lengthy period of bullying at school, were awarded just a fraction of the amount of compensation they had claimed against both the school and the parents of two of their son's tormentors. In giving the ruling the judge agreed that the defendants should have stopped the victim from being punched and kicked, but, also, that bullying had *not* taken place. The events leading to the suicide were seen as necessary character-building for Japanese students. The parents of the boy had revealed that their son had been forced to undergo humiliations such as walking around the school with a moustache painted on his face and singing from a tree. Students and four teachers of the boy's school, Nakano Fujimi Junior High, had also, in one incident, circulated a funeral card on which memorial wishes were written to the boy as if he had died.

In another well-publicized incident, a fifteen year old student of Kobe Takatsuka High School, died in 1990 when her skull was crushed as she was caught between the gatepost and the quarter-ton school gate which was closed on latecomers by a vigilant teacher. She was running to morning school. The subsequent court case found the teacher guilty of negligence and imposed a suspended prison sentence.

In July 1992 the headmaster and nine instructors from the Totsuka Yachting School for delinquents were also given suspended prison sentences and terms of probation following the deaths of four youths at the school.

They had died in three separate incidents as a direct result of injuries inflicted by instructors, in two cases. The other two, fifteen year olds, had drowned when they jumped from a boat in an attempted escape from the school. Their bodies have never been recovered. Hiroshi Totsuka continues to operate this very expensive private 'alternative' school. Totsuka admitted that he felt some responsibility for the deaths but added that he found students got over their behavioural problems quickly when heavy corporal punishment was used. In criticizing Totsuka and his instructors, the judge nevertheless added that he thought corporal punishment was an effective means to reform some students.

In two other incidents, reported in February 1993, a student's spleen was ruptured when a teacher kicked him because he was reading a comic book in class. The incident, at a high school in Ibaraki Prefecture, resulted in the student having to undergo surgery. No disciplinary action was taken against the teacher. Earlier, a thirteen year old boy died from suffocation at a junior high school in Yamagata Prefecture. The victim had been subjected to a considerable amount of bullying before the incident in which he was wrapped upside down and left in a gym mat by other students during after hours activity at the school.

It seems then that cases of violence are of two kinds—those inflicted by over-zealous teachers, and those that result from bullying by pupils. The Japan Times (3rd February 1993) reported that every year at least one hundred students suffer fractures, sprains or bruises as the result of expressly forbidden corporal punishment by teachers, and a 1991 government survey found 22,000 cases of bullying in schools. The lack of interference by teachers in bullying cases has been commented on by White:

> **Teachers have avoided intervening for fear of be-**

It's been quite a while since this snapshot was taken, but the central figure, Satoshi, has not been forgotten! He and his equally loved wife Satchiko, and their little son Seigo, spent a year with us at The Free School in Albany as interns. We still mourn their absence! Satchiko became pregnant, and chose to have her baby back home, so Satoshi stayed on without her for several months. When it was finally time for him to return home, we had a farewell ceremony, and there wasn't a dry eye in the house! Including Satoshi's eyes.This beautiful couple are by no means the only wonderful interns who have graced our doors in recent years.

Another family equally precious to us are Toro and Aiko and their two little boys, who stayed with us for a year, and are now living and working in a Japanese community dedicated to teaching a wide asortment of agricultural arts and crafts. And, most precious of all, we have Michyo Kaya, now married to an American and with a tiny daughter, Hanna, both now full-time members of our school! Mich is a very talented weaver whose assigned task of forcing Japanese children to practice the craft she loves so well broke her heart and drove her to our shores, where she found us, by some marvelous chance!

I have to believe that all is not lost for Japanese education with such inspired teachers now pouring their love and passion back into Japan's educational system! At least, I hope that's true!

> coming victims themselves. And in some cases, a bullied child is marked as different, simply by virtue of having been bullied. Not infrequently, such children may retreat into solitude, truancy, violent retaliation, or even suicide. In a society where interdependence is the means and the end of the good life, being locked out is disastrous. (White, ("Behind the Violence in Japanese Schools," *Christian Science Monitor*, 29th March, 1993)

Shute, in a book aimed at British education, has some interesting points to make which are also relevant to the situation in Japan. In writing of a concept that he identifies as 'the culture of hardness' he says:

> Instead of demanding that the school treat this oppression as a serious problem some teachers trivialise it and insist that the victims cause their own plight by not 'standing up for themselves'. Parents sometimes reinforce this idea by telling the boy or girl who has been bullied to give the bully a dose of his or her own medicine instead of complaining to adults. In this way, from their earliest years, many children come to believe that it is 'right' to suppress any feelings of pity and concern for other children which they may have, in order to be strong and socially dominant. (Shute, *Compulsory Schooling Disease*, 1993).

Despite the relaxing of education in some ways by the Ministry of Education over the past few years, problems such as those resulting in 'horror stories' like the above are still all too frequent. It is not enough to look simply at the successes in academic terms of education in Japan. These successes are admirable and have already received adequate attention in the recent past. However, a hard look at the situation faced by potential reformers or radicals reveals a much bleaker situation if we are to view things, for example, from the perspective of Neill's principles of love, play and happiness. Horio, in acknowledging Japan's recent prosperity also remarks:

> As the pressures increase to get children on the academic escalator to social success, we find growing num-

bers of young people having no time or place to play, nor friends to play with.

> Under the pressure of their parents' expectations, and forced into endless studies intended to ensure later success in our society's examination madness, our children are being robbed of their childhood. (Horio, *op. cit.* p.15).

Simply to ease the entry requirements for schools and universities or to allow more freedom in organizing the school day is by no means enough to remedy the situation. Some indications of the past few years are promising. As we have seen though, most Japanese parents do not want schools that encourage too much individuality, while the concept of children's rights is barely formed at all. Nevertheless, the ideas of radicals from other countries such as A.S. Neill have been known in Japan since his writings first began to be published in Japanese in the 1930s and the popularity of his Summerhill School is evidenced by the fact that the highest number of foreign nationals currently at the school are sent there from Japan.

Britain and Japan

In Britain, the 1960s saw the development of a number of freer, child- state system and especially in primary education (which in Britain is from ages five to eleven). This was largely the result of the influence on the state system of progressive ideas, though A. S. Neill's more radical work was also publicized and led to the development of more friendly relationships between teachers and children, and to the recognition by many in education of the child's need for love and the growth of personality. Changes in the secondary school system were less evident.

In the mid to late 1970s a backlash against increased freedom began. The erosion of radical and progressive methods continues to this day, hence the implementation of the Education Reform Act of 1988 which has led to the establishment of some compulsory subjects in schools and for the first time to the imposition of a national curriculum and the testing of children from the age of seven. The government has centred schools within the also, more recently, called for a return to traditional and whole-class teaching methods Japan's apparent prosperity being cited as an example of a country where education is a 'success'. In 1992 the attack was given further impetus by the adverse publicity surrounding the broadcast of a new, but sensational and unsympathetic television documentary on Summerhill (the most famous libertarian school) which caused outrage among the press and some members of the public, and even led to abusive telephone calls and death threats being received by members of the Summerhill community. In 1959 the British government was suggesting:

> Each teacher shall think for himself, and work out for himself such methods of teaching as may use his power to the best advantage and be best suited to the particular needs and conditions of the school... (Department of Education and Science, *Handbook of Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers*, 1959, P.9)

By the time I became a primary school teacher in Britain in 1978, the Plowden report on *Children and their Primary Schools* had become the bible of teaching training, and child-centred methods were evident in most primary schools. This allowed for a considerable amount of freedom and also put a heavy responsibility on individual teachers who were expected to devise and carry out topics and teaching schedules within the schools more or less as they wished. The 1988 Act has attacked this freedom and British primary schools may now be moving much closer to their Japanese counterparts in many respects.

The British primary schools have by no means been without their own problems, though these difficulties are often quite different from those faced by the primary school teacher in Japan. In the big cities especially there may be challenges to be faced with non-native speakers and with large numbers of mixed racial and cultural backgrounds. In some classes, in my experience, I had to cope with Bangladeshi and Vietnamese children who spoke no English at all. Standards of literacy of both native and non-native speaking children are also well below those boasted by Japan, and the tensions of controlling a sometimes difficult class of lively primary school children are very real. In my own time at a primary school in London, one member of the teaching staff gave up teaching altogether to pursue a different job, another suffered a mental breakdown and later applied to re-train for another career, and the fifty year old headmistress applied for early retirement.

Pressures of discipline are, of course, especially magnified at secondary school level. In Japan, truancy has become a major concern, but, ironically perhaps, the opposite has started to happen in Britain and children who are anti-social or disruptive may be

These exclusions, made possible since Head Teachers were given more control under the 1988 Act, prohibit children from attending school altogether and the number of exclusions had increased by 30% between 1990 and 1992. Many of these children are refused entry by any school. The situation is such that a number of Children's Homes have youngsters who are there because no school will take them.

More positively, the average class size in London primary schools during my time there in the mid 1980s was twenty-five, and in the school where I was last a member of staff my own class comprised just sixteen. Despite the many problems, which cannot be remedied by the backward-looking action taken by the government and the education authorities, primary schools in Britain have never become as regimented as those I have visited in Japan, and British children also have a great deal more time to play. The 'excluded' from school. idea of going to school on Saturdays would be unthinkable, the concept of the juku does not even exist for most people, and in six years as a primary school teacher in England I never once gave any homework to any of my pupils.

Another major difference, however, between Britain and Japan is found in relationships between parents and teachers. Parents in Japan take an obsessively large interest in the academic progress of their children, but the other extreme often applies in Britain. Working-class parents, in particular, often feel intimidated by schools or for various reasons have little contact with teachers. I would estimate that in my time as a teacher in London I was able to discuss the progress of children with perhaps 20% of their parents. In the schools I have worked in only one had a Parent-Teacher Association and this was disbanded during my stay there because of lack of interest following a meeting when only three parents attended. It seems a pity that with the advantage in Japan of interested parents they are not able to utilize their interest to anything more worthwhile than worrying about examination prospects.

Last year, in Kobe, I visited a primary school whose Head told me that his school has been rather disciplined ten years ago but that now things were 'very free'. The evidence on view, however, was to the contrary as far as my experience in British primary schools is concerned.

Compared to them this Kobe School was more like a military barracks. There seems to be a common assumption among many Japanese—both parents and teachers—that although there is a long way to go in secondary education before the child is put back into the centre of the educational process, the primary schools of Japan are already relatively free and there is not much wrong with them. But the pressures and expectations of adults involved in education affect the whole system of schooling and not just its higher levels. Yoshiaki Yamamura has noted:

> ...Christian cultures, with their view of human beings as fallen creatures, who can regain an honest life only a little at a time and with divine assistance, seem to regard human nature as inherently evil...In contrast, the Japanese tend to think of children as inherently good. (Yamamura, "The Child in Japanese Society," in *Azuma*, 1986, p.89).

Childhood in Japan is seen as a period of grace, in contrast to the Western view. However, although this belief in the innate goodness of the child remains, the idea that the child should play freely or that he will find his own way naturally has been abandoned because of the pressures of society and the competitive education system. But if the Japanese can retain this idea of goodness and emphasize it more, they will be at an advantage over the British in pressing for more freedom for children.

It is not enough, though, for parents to merely think about these ideas wishfully, they must take action to change their schools and be bold enough to abandon academic concerns and allow their children to enjoy their childhood. In doing this, changes must also come from the political arena if any fundamental or lasting effects are to take hold. Purely cosmetic changes such as those seen in the recent elections in Japan can never bring the widespread changes needed and so the social and political must go hand in hand.

Back in 1917, A. S. Neill wrote, "the first thing a child should learn is to be a rebel". Chris Shute's much more recent writings echo Neill's philosophy and can be offered, finally, as the best advice that can be given to both Japanese (and British) people concerned about the education of their children:

> **The tragedy of our society, potentially the most humane and progressive there has ever been, is that most of its members want the edujcation of their children to be simple, robust, no-nonsense, and as much like their own as possible.** Good education, education that enlivens and empowers the child for the rest of his or her life is the opposite of that. It values the child as he or she is now, not as the adult one would like him or her to become. It is perilous because it cannot be assessed by any reliable system of tests: you cannot examine happiness, or give a mark out of ten for inventiveness or clarity of thought. Above all, it leads to independence of mind, and instinctively the established adult world hates and fears independent thinking, especially in children. (Shute, *op.cit.* p.62).

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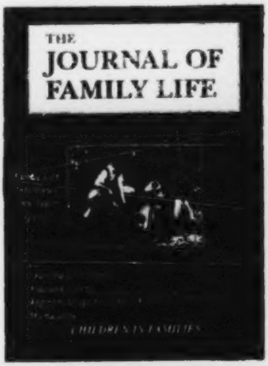

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TWO FROM BILL KAUL:

SOME NOTES TOWARD A DISINTEGRATIVE EDUCATIONAL NON-SYSTEM

by, through, with Bill Kaul

Since the time of the pre-Socratic philosophers, it has been the onus of Western (Eurocentric) education to provide a system of education. Initially, this system was not geared toward educating the young or even the masses of people: it was geared to groom wealthy young men for a successful life of public service. This is our heritage.

As Eurocentric education passed through the times of Christian (Roman) domination, it became fully enmeshed in a system that was at once metaphysical and ecclesiatically hierarchical. That is to say, it was a system designed (in Augustine's terms) to educate the same class of wealthy (or hand-picked) young men not only for service in the City of Man but also in the City of God (since one was a mirror for the other).

The medieval university system was a good example of this compound purpose: its divisions of Law, Theology, Medicine, and Arts, etc. were all bound within a system which had at its head deans, ranks of professors, ranks of degrees, administrative functionaries and so forth whose role was to insure the smooth boundary subsumption of Church and State within the training. These leaders held sway not only over "subject matter" but also the bodies and souls of their charges.

This system is still the basis for our university system today, and its neat hierarchies (with their metaphysical trappings and intentions) are still in place. (If you don't believe it, just attend the installation ceremonies for a new college president sometime. Gad! It's like being in Freiburg or Paris in 1250.)

Only later did education move into the truly public arena—this in the "democratic" era, that time when the buzzword was "freedom" and "rule by the people." *Which* people, of course, would be a matter the years would decide. At first—and during the many years prior to this era—it was far too dangerous to educate the masses of people; to do so would practically insure rebellion and blatant widespread questioning of accepted teaching.

Afterward (especially in America, it has been taught) the system of "free public education" was a sign of liberty: yet the structures of education did not change—the ruling classes still had sway over not only the curriculum but also over who counted as a "free person" in terms of eligibility for education. The academic hierarchies of medieval Europe were transferred and translated, but the flow of power and the notion of complete physical and mental control over those to be educated ("students," a peculiar class of human animal) were basically unaltered. (q.v. professor Beck's social histories of education)

Hence, "education" (as it was called) was assumed to be of that (Western/Eurocentric) nature *only* by the governmental bodies which regulated it—there was no other form of education, at least none which prepared its learners to be "acceptable, useful, and productive members of society."

To see that this is a peculiarly narrow—even tortured and contorted—view of both the structure and function of education doesn't take a great deal of vision. Surely education was (and is) always happening outside of these structures, surely mothers taught their young from the first suckling, surely brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles always taught: surely the very air, sights, and sounds around any growing, nominally perceptive human were alive with teaching, quivering with lessons. Surely all humans learn, it is, in Doug Robinson's words, an "explosively human activity." It cannot be stopped. It can only be channeled, and that channeling—as noted above—is nearly always for a political purpose. The political purpose of education is nearly always linked with the hoarding of power, and those in power determine what is to be an "education." Success is determined not in the degree to which a human is integrated with its environment—it is determined by the degree to which a human is twisted to fit a job description or set of outcomes (outcomes determined not from within the learner's own cultural/personal milieu but from within the hierarchy of the academy itself.) Social maladjustment—which may be a sign of health—is diagnosed as a "problem" and is remedied by a good dose of "education."

I will say it again: learning cannot be stopped: it can only be channeled into streams or paths: those streams or paths are always laid out to a purpose: that purpose is linked to the preservation of a social order, to keeping power in its place.

The streams or paths of Western (Eurocentric) education are rooted in their aristocratic and theocratic soils, so much so that most people who are schoolers or schooled never question those structures: alternate structures are practically unthinkable without hierarchy, without careful control of outcomes and procedures.

This is a farce.

If, indeed, learning is an explosively human activity, then it behooves those involved in it to set spark to the powder keg, to begin the process of disintegration, of destruction, so that alternate visions—even personal visions—of learning can begin to take place.

I am speaking here of family, tribe, gang, group, introspective, exploratory learning, of the reintegration of the loving and caring that should in a functional family or tribe (or nation?) be the system, insofar as there is a "system."

You may call it "family" or "tribal" values—but if so, I mean it in the sense of values generated from a synthesis of the members of that tribe, not as a governmental body, but as a family body. people caring for one another: that's the system.

The subject matter is the world around us, and the question is, how do we relate to it? The method is already there: it needs no training, until it is beaten out of us through fear and intimidation and odious unrealistic ranking, it is always there. Think of a child, exploring the world around them, asking questions. Think of that child being told to learn it at school, or being told some

answer that shuts off all further inquiry: think of why elders have no time to explore the world with their children: the children are in school and the elders are laboring at a 'job." The system continues: the child is to become the new overworked, disembodied, unattached drone.

Perhaps it is only through the disorganization and disintegration of today's social reality that a new one (maybe an old one) can be born (or reborn)—perhaps (look around!) there need be no calls for this, perhaps it is already happening.

SOME NOTES TOWARD A PRACTICAL IMPRACTICAL CURRICULUM

by Dr. Bill Kaul

I. Flexibility

A. A curriculum must bend to meet the needs of the students it is designed to serve. Involving students in the writing of a curriculum is seldom a bad idea. (Diagnosis always involves input from the patient's own perspective.)

B. A curriculum should be based on community as well as global needs; it needs to be able to move between global and local realities, building bridges between the two. Involving the community in the writing of a curriculum is seldom a bad idea. (Global involvement is usual, handed down by pundits.)

C. A curriculum must not be more than a plan nor less than a plan. Expectations of outcome from a curriculum must also leave room for unexpected pathways, unexpected (not necessarily undesired) outcomes. Plan ahead, but don't plan *all* the results.

D. Small is beautiful—where people can talk and work together openly and honestly (students, faculty, community, parents, administration), there is a synergy of effort which cannot be matched by any written plan of action. (Examples abound: common law, unwritten constitutions, etc.) (Even written constitutions are mutable.)

E. One would hope that the writers of the curriculum are as flexible as the recipients: Piaget's notions of assimilation and accommodation flow both ways: curriculum changes not only students but also teachers, parents, community, etc. in both ways.

II. Effectiveness

A. The effectiveness of a curriculum is determined by the visible evidence resulting from its implementation. Some questions:

—What was learned?

—How was it learned?

—Who learned it?

—When was it learned? Under what conditions?

—How do we know it was learned?

—What are the results of this learning?

—What useful divergences were uncovered?

—What things were *not* learned? By whom? Why?

B. A curriculum's effectiveness is also closely tied to the manner in which it was implemented. (See "Flexibility.")

C. Some things cannot be measured, only described. Descriptions are often more valuable than measurements because they contain their own explanatory keys.

D. Part of the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of a curriculum lies in uncovering the "hidden curriculum." Uncovering the "hidden curriculum" is also the work of a part of the curriculum itself: critical thinking applied internally.

III. The Dirty Work of Writing a Curriculum

A. Always be guided by the idea that a curriculum is an *open* document with a *closed* purpose; that is, it should be written with *both* the idea of a secure plan and vision and the ability to change as conditions warrant. (Thus the value of close communication between *all* parties affected by curriculum, bearing in mind that the writing of the curriculum is itself *a part of the curriculum*. This is much like the notion that writing of a constitution is a part of government, as the amendment of the constitution is a part of the document that can't be foreseen.)

B. The wording of a curriculum should be clear and accessible. Nothing is more odious than intellectual doubletalk for "I don't know" or "I won't tell you."

C. Complex curriculum issues should be handled as are complex philosophical issues: the drawing of lines, the application of Ockham's Razor.

D. Disciplinary concerns should be addressed in such a manner that the goals of a discipline are exposed in the interconnections it has with other disciplines, as well as its role in the community; e.g., what is the role of communication in history, the role of history in the community, the role of writing in history, the science of writing, the biology of communication?

E. When possibilities are closed off as a matter of practical concern (see "C," above) that shouldn't mean they are buried.

F. People who aren't familiar with the process of designing and implementing curriculum should be taught-- this should be a part of the curriculum. In this manner the document is written more quickly and with more input—it tends to achieve "A," above.

IV. The Content of a Curriculum

A. The content of a curriculum should focus on the large issues of life as expressed in the forms of life practiced in the community.

B. These large issues should be addressed in both a local and global context; e.g., the issue of overpopulation as both a local and global concern, overpopulation as it affects jobs locally.

C. A very decent curriculum can be built around the linguistic constants of Who What When Where Why and How as they are applied to broad issues. The domains of various disciplines make themselves manifest in these applications. Bridges are built. Relevance is established.

D. A curriculum's timeline should be flexible, based on outcomes for individuals and communities—if topic A is mastered by person B in two weeks but mastered by person C in ten weeks, so be it. The interconnectedness of a curriculum is both a function of time and readiness. Thus, students must also teach, plan, and evaluate—learning to do these things, learning to take responsibility for one's own education, this is a large function of a curriculum.

E. A good example of this is the Hampshire curriculum design.

F. Another is the design of Fauré or that of Montessori.

G. Chamofsky.

H. Socrates.

I. Etc.

Here's a note from Bill:

The latest ΣΚΟΛΕ was right on. Things still suck at the "Alternative" school I'm at but I'm hanging forth on the glories of faculty/student revolt in the best Navajo tradition of resisting enforced education... perhaps, ah, maybe ...

And as ever my best heathen blessings and Sadism,

Bill
PO Box 698
Waterflow, NM 87421

“AM I *REALLY* QUALIFIED TO TEACH MY OWN CHILDREN?”

Some Thoughts on This Common and Provocative Question

by Richard Prystowsky

> *There are many kinds of seeds in us, both good and bad. Some were planted during our lifetime, and some were transmitted by our parents, our ancestors, and our society.... Every time we practice mindful living, we plant healthy seeds and strengthen the healthy seeds already in us. Healthy seeds function similarly to antibodies... If we plant wholesome, healing, refreshing seeds, they will take care of the negative seeds, even without our asking them. To succeed, we need to cultivate a good reserve of refreshing seeds.”*
>
> —*Thich Nhat Hanh,*
> Peace Is Every Step

> *“The kids are all learning, all the time. Life is their greatest teacher. The B.A.s and M.A.s and Ph.D.s on the staff are minor actors.”*
>
> —*Daniel Greenberg,*

Would that homeschooling parents had a dollar for each time that they asked themselves or have been asked by others why they think that they are qualified to teach their own. The question is certainly an intriguing one, and, for many homeschooling parents, a pressing one. In this essay, I would like to address some of the “psychological” and “spiritual” concerns raised by this question, couching this discussion within the context of some crucial links between parent-child teaching and holistic family living. I will be leaving aside concerns such as one's knowledge of the subject matter, one's ability to find important data, and so on; clearly, these latter concerns are important, but they are beyond the purview of the present paper.

My intention here is to help parents—especially those new to and those thinking about homeschooling—who are struggling with the questions of whether or not they really are both capable of teaching and qualified to teach their own and whether or not they are (or would be) acting responsibly by homeschooling their children. To this end, I offer a discussion of the following personal traits, which, in my more than thirteen years of college teaching, I have come to see as essential for anyone to possess who desires to be a good teacher, that person's profound knowledge of her subject matter or in-depth training in teaching notwithstanding (N.B.: one's being "certified" to teach is not synonymous with one's being "qualified" to teach). My greatest mentors possessed these traits, although, to the best of my knowledge, none had taken a single course in educational theory or methods. If you yourself have or are striving to have all of these traits (the following list is not meant to be exhaustive), then you are probably fit to teach your own. On the other hand, if you lack and have no interest in attaining them, then perhaps you ought not teach either your own or anyone else's children.

1. The willingness to engage in child-led/student-led learning

Like many homeschooling parents, I've discovered that *meaningful* learning can occur only if the learner *actively* wants to learn, gives her consent to learn from a particular teacher (unless she wants to be self-taught), and initiates the learning process. In other words, the desire to learn comes from within and not from outside of the learner. Moreover, as the output of mass public education demonstrates, one can even do great harm to a learner by trying to make her learn against her will.[1]

Unless you are willing to

let your child lead the way—fully or partly—to her own learning, you might find yourself engaged in a home version of the worst sort of organized schooling, in which teachers force-feed students information that the latter understandably resist learning. In my college classes, I try to help students see that, although I can try to provide an atmosphere in which they can take some intellectual risks, I cannot learn for them. Only they can learn for themselves.

Before moving on, I should add that, both in the classroom and at home, I have often found that my best teaching moments occur when, learning along with my students or children, I discover meaning and uncover knowledge *in the*

process of teaching. Additionally, I feel that one of my goals as a teacher/parent is to help guide my students/children so that they can teach themselves. Secure self-directed learners know when they don't know something, and they know enough to ask for help when they need or want it. In this regard, my six-year-old son, for example, acts no differently from my self-directed students. Last year, for instance, he virtually taught himself to write. When he needed help, he asked for it; when he didn't need help, he simply wrote, sometimes laboriously, sometimes not—as is the case with most (if not all) *professional* writers. As Daniel Greenberg and John Taylor Gatto (among others) have suggested, to teach successfully, one must have or cultivate the ability first to recognize a learner's desire to learn something and then to seize the opportunity to help him learn what he wants or needs to learn.[2] Thus, if I don't know how to assist my students or children when they ask me for help, I feel that I am duty-bound as their teacher to try to help them discover how they can receive good assistance elsewhere.

2. **Real, genuine humility and compassion.**

I often try to teach my students that they will have achieved much in the way of good critical thinking if they come to realize about themselves what all great thinkers come to realize about *themselves*: to wit, that they have learned enough to know how little they really know. Concerning the present topic, we can say with certainty that someone who lacks genuine humility cannot be satisfactorily compassionate towards others, because she doesn't yet have the inner strength and security to be satisfactorily compassionate towards herself. Such a person, then, is not likely to be a very good teacher—a fact to which anyone can attest who has endured even a day in the classroom of a teacher who lacked compassion for others. In any event, a truly humble, compassionate teacher is often wise enough to lead her students to discover for themselves what they need to know and secure enough to validate those of their insights that are authentic, meaningful, and moral in the highest sense of the word — even if (and perhaps especially if) these insights are quite different from her own. Such a teacher gives her students a precious gift when she shows them that she is strong enough to be humble and honest concerning what she knows and doesn't know.

Since most of my students have suffered humiliation during their schooling and other training in "socialization," they often have trouble distinguishing humility from self-loathing; in the worst cases, they act in the manner of seriously wounded animals—defensive, protective, and, in the main, wary of showing themselves vulnerable in any way to anyone. Neither I nor anyone else can teach such persons why they should be or how they can be humble; only they can teach themselves these lessons. However, I can and do try to help a number of my students discover their own paths to humility and compassion by helping them see how they themselves might begin healing those damaged parts of their inner selves that they now guard at all costs, those parts of their inner being, if you will, the damage to which the best "alternative" teaching efforts might have helped to prevent.

3. **The inner security to teach others freely.**

Although I don't consider myself a very secure person, I do feel very strongly that, when my students have reached the point at which they are humble enough and courageous enough to begin drawing out from within themselves their own deepest truths, I have outlived my usefulness as their teacher. To extrapolate, I would suggest that, whenever we teach, we should always try to do so freely, so that we can remain lovingly detached from our students' learning obligations, which are always personal. All teachers need to keep in mind that there is a world of difference between our *wanting* to help persons learn for *their* own sake and our *needing* to teach them for *our* own sake (of course, these two conditions need not be mutually exclusive). If the latter is the case, we might be either projecting onto those who learn from us our own insecurities or making them the vehicles by means of which we carry out our own political or social agendas. Using our students/children to fill the narcissistic voids and heal the narcissistic wounds in our own lives could eventually prove quite harmful to both them and us.[3]

One final matter here: I have found that neither my own children nor my college students need me to tell them what is best for them or what they should know; in fact, they often resent (and rightfully so) my occasional efforts to own their responsibility to make meaningful choices in and for their own lives, especially when I am interfering with their choices to learn or not learn. Often, both my children and a number of my students seem to sense that such moves on my part represent controlling, co-dependent behavior, and they healthily resist these moves. They want to make their own decisions and be responsible for their own mistakes. For my part, I need to recognize when I am hindering learners from reaching rather than helping them to reach their own educational goals. I, too, need to own and learn from my mistakes.

4. **The willingness to learn, often from those whom we teach.**

If there is anything that is obvious in great teachers, it is their willingness to learn, often from their own students. Simply put, one cannot be a good teacher if one has lost the desire to learn, and any teacher unwilling to learn from his students is a teacher whose best days are past. If you have no desire to learn or no willingness to learn along with those whom you teach, or if you don't feel that those who study with you can teach you anything of real value, then you probably ought not to be teaching *anyone*.

5. **Patience**

In the quick-fix, fast-food, narcotizing culture in which we live, patience is a rare commodity. But it is an essential ingredient to good teaching. Since each child learns in her own way and at her own pace, we need to be patient enough to see how our children engage in their own ever-developing and sometimes changing learning processes so that we can help them be active, confident learners. We need to give ourselves permission to allow them to learn differently from the ways in which we learn and from the ways in which other children (including *our* other children) seem to be learning. We need to accept as a perfectly normal state of affairs, for example, the fact that one of our children might want to read at age four but that another might not want to read even at age eight. In short, we need to be patient with ourselves and our children as we all struggle to live individually and mutually meaningful lives. Oh, the possible differences in all of our lives had most of our own teachers understood this need for patience in *themselves*!

* * * * * *

When you teach your children at home, you are doing far more than "homeschooling" them;[4] exercising maximum control over your family's right to do what is in its own best moral interests, you are swimming against a tide of enormously destructive and powerful mediocrity and mainstreaming in your attempts to help your children live meaningful lives as whole, independent beings. You are trying to keep your children from suffering the fate of many of our nation's schooled children, who have been conditioned to be actively uninterested in and sometimes openly hostile to meaningful, shared, participatory communal living, and who, as passive, obedient learners, have little interest in themselves, in the meaning and value of their existence, or in the value of their communities. I have seen many such learners in my college classes. Often lacking good social skills, good study habits, a healthy dose of adult responsibility, and, most conspicuously, the self-motivation and self-reliance recognizable in a confident learner, they are frequently uninterested in and even hostile to learning, especially to learning new or controversial material, even if such material can help them live more meaningful and compassionate lives. More significantly, many of the students in this group who are trying to recondition themselves into becoming active, mature learners have trouble trusting themselves; not a few often seem to believe that their professors, and not they themselves, possess the answers to *their* most important questions.

If I have noticed any common denominator among those of my students who seem disinterested in their own pursuits, in their own learning agendas, sometimes even in their own and others' lives, it is that these kinds of students seem distanced from themselves. This state of being is common among persons who have been conditioned to be passive and whose psyches need to protect them from their being too emotionally harmed. For such students, "know thyself" is as foreign a concept as is the idea that they are responsible for their own learning, for their own *lives*. Self-knowledge and self-respect seem almost anathema to them, cruel reminiscences and temptations of vaguely desirable, ideal personal states of being that, to them, in their present existential dilemma, seem utterly unattainable.

For the record, I don't mean to imply that, by homeschooling your children, you necessarily will insure that they will be self-reliant, mature adults who have an unrelenting zest for learning. And I especially don't mean to imply that you ought to be homeschooling your children *now* primarily to help insure their "success" in the *future*. Rather, I simply want to clarify what I see as being centrally at stake here: to wit, that you have both the right and the obligation to advocate for your child's needs, to do what's best for your child, even though the culture at large often makes it difficult for you to do so, and even though you might occasionally have doubts or questions about your educational theories and practices or about your aptitude as a teacher (all good-faith teachers have such doubts or questions).

Remember that, for the most part, mass-organized schooling (public or private) sets up learning situations that are convenient not only for textbook publishers, teachers, administrators, and members of school boards, but also for parents unluckily caught in the anti-family, anti-child trap that our culture has laid for us all. On the other hand, holistic family living demands that the parent-teacher (a vibrant and ancient PTA) respond to the learning needs of her or his child by setting up learning situations that meet those needs. You know that few persons (if anyone) outside of your family will care as much as you care to meet your child's needs. Put differently, you know the difference between being with your child and leaving your child with even a warm, loving, devoted caretaker. And you know that your *child* knows the difference, too. With this understanding in mind, think of those children who—as perhaps you once did—at the end of the school year or school cycle, feel utterly relieved finally to have the time to do the things that they find meaningful in their lives, and who can now spend more than a few fleeting moments with the persons who matter most to them. How distressing that we have placed our nation's children in this bind. But how promising that, as homeschooling parents, we can avoid being a party to such madness.

FOOTNOTES

[1] For some excellent discussions of this issue, see Daniel Greenberg's *Free At Last: The Sudbury Valley School* (Framingham, MA: Sudbury Valley School Press, 1987), pp. 15-18 and *passim*, and Herbert Kohl's *I Won't Learn from You! The Role of Assent in Learning* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 1991).

[2] In a November 1967 *Redbook* article entitled "How Teachers Make Children Hate Reading," John Holt—still a public school educator at the time that he wrote this particular piece—analyzes the differences between what I'm calling child-led learning and what I'm calling force-fed learning. His article is reprinted in *The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Expository Prose*, ed. by Arthur M. Eastman, et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1984), pp. 224–232.

[3] For a detailed discussion concerning these kinds of matters, see Alice Miller's *The Drama of the Gifted Child: The Search for the True Self*, trans. by Ruth Ward (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1981).

[4] For a trenchant critique of the word "homeschooling," see David Guterson's *Family Matters: Why Homeschooling Makes Sense* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1992), p. 5ff.

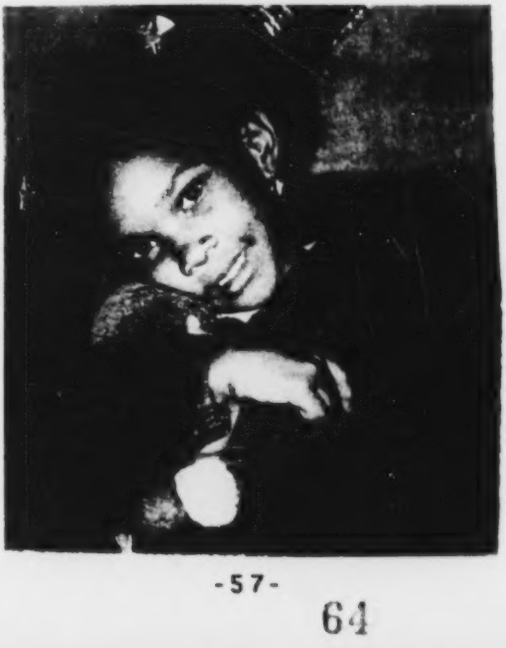
Concerning some of the most important issues and controversies having to do with homeschooling in general, Guterson's book is possibly the best text on the market. However, despite the author's many good insights (his ideas on "socialization" are particularly cogent), like all books

Guterson's is not without its share of interpretive troubles. For example, in his controversial chapter "Schools and Families: A Proposal," in which he argues for a range of what one might term "ideal school programs," Guterson never even mentions the Sudbury Valley School.

More generally, Guterson's often facile use of data leaves one with the impression that the author sometimes has only a superficial understanding of the matters that he discusses (as, for example, Guterson's interesting but far too truncated discussion of philosophy [p. 118ff.]).

These and other textual problems notwithstanding, Guterson's book is, in my view, mandatory reading for anyone seriously interested in understanding much of the sum and substance of homeschooling.

Richard Prystowsky homeschools his kids and also teaches in the School of Humanities and Languages at Irvine Valley College in California. I hope he will write us more articles as time goes on, and also give us more info about himself. This one is a great start, right?



FEAR
by Chris Mercogliano

It has been said and often repeated that the only thing to fear is fear itself. Now I don't know about the "only," but fear certainly is frightening; and worse still is the way in which it feeds on itself. The sad fact today is that we are living in a society increasingly run by its fears—the fear of personal violence and crime, the fear of the international political violence we call war, the fear of nuclear holocaust which is receiving increasing competition from the fear of ecological holocaust, the fear of scarcity, the fear of growing old and dying—this list could go on for pages. A substantial segment of our national economy, beginning with the insurance racket, preys on these fears by offering us protective and preventive policies, substances and devices of every imaginable kind. In short, fear has become a growth industry.

Where I encounter this spreading contagion of fear most poignantly is in my work as a teacher and school administrator. Fear-based policy and decision-making from the national level right down to the individual classroom has reached epidemic proportions. While ours is an independent school largely unaffected in any straight-line way by this trend, I still find us struggling daily with its many subtle, indirect effects. Even though we long ago opted out of the traditional reward and punishment teaching methodology which uses fear as a primary motivator, and even though we are up front with our prospective new families right from the beginning, warning them that we will neither bribe nor coerce their children into learning, the distinctive odor of fear remains in the air nonetheless.

It's everywhere, so why wouldn't our Free School parents, teachers and students smell it, too? The entire nation is hung-up these days on academic achievement, or the perceived lack thereof. We used to be falling behind the Russians; now it's the Japanese. Every day a new Chicken Little warns us that something must be done about falling standardized test scores, which don't measure true intelligence anyway. Academic training is foisted on defenseless preschoolers at ever earlier stages, and the call for lengthening the school year grows louder and louder. And then comes the blame game. It's the teachers' fault for not teaching or expecting hard enough; it's the students' fault for not studying hard enough; it's the parents' fault for not caring hard enough about their kids' education; it's the country's fault for not maintaining hard enough standards. There's no end to this list, either.

Here is the voice of fear speaking, where the reasoning is always circular. It's like the ancient image of the serpent swallowing its own tail—there's no beginning and no end—and therefore nowhere to break into such a vicious cycle of negative reinforcement. If this were the end of it; if the trouble were just that massive numbers of adults had nothing better to worry about than how their children were doing in school, then there really wouldn't be much of a problem. Regrettably though, kids invariably become infected as well, and their natural, in-born desire and will to learn gets stifled in the process. Children, who live within the boundaries of their parents' emotional bodies, literally smell the grown-ups' fear and this is how it is passed down.

I chose the modality of smell here for a couple of reasons. For one, fear has a distinctive odor, a lesson well-known to anyone who has spent much time around bees or dogs. Secondly, the connection between the olfactory nerve and the brain is a large and evolutionarily ancient one. The extraordinary way in which certain smells can evoke powerful images and memories is evidence of this important mind/body interface—all the more powerful because it is an entirely unconscious response. In other words, a parent's fear need not be spoken—though it often is—in order to be communicated. An anxious look, an apparently innocent question about what a child did (or didn't do) in school today, or what isn't being talked about can all be worth a thousand words and do the job of imprinting this kind of low-level fear quite effectively. Oftentimes, parents aren't even aware they are expressing fear, or doubt or insecurity, and unfortunately, the more subtle the frequency of the message—the farther out of the range of audible hearing—often the greater is the impact on the receiver. Then, of course, there is the classic TV sitcom scene at report card time when the overwrought father is berating his failing son and asking him if he wants to end up collecting garbage for a living some day. That kind of parental anger is obviously based in fear; and because it is so blatant, I think it is a bit easier for kids to deal with.

Shifting the "blame" away from parents, for I don't believe for a minute that the problem begins at home, it must be understood that our entire educational system and its methodology are based on fear. Why else would every "learning task" be broken down into tiny bits so that no chewing was required—and then endlessly repeated? Why else would progress and achievement be so carefully measured? Why else would we as a nation continue to spend countless billions of dollars per year to maintain a system that we collectively know is not serving so many children or their families' real needs?

Fear is a powerful emotion. It shunts the brain away from higher-level thinking, an autonomic survival response I will describe in greater detail in a moment. It prevents parents from thinking clearly about their children's growth and development, rendering many unable to question the school system's assessment that their children are not performing up to some arbitrary standard. These frightened parents then proceed to frighten their children, who return to classrooms which are controlled by frightened teachers, who, in turn, are sweating it out under the supervision of frightened superintendents... So it goes, right up to the top of a giant pyramid of fear, with the hapless students trapped somewhere in a thick middle layer, literally, physiologically unable to think their way out of the bind they're in. Instead, they resort to an unending array of defensive maneuvers, each according to their underlying character structures. On one end of the spectrum, you will find passive kids anchoring their resistance in "forgetting" and playing dumb ("Huh... say what?"); while on the other end there are the aggressive types who actively rebel, refuse and eventually opt out of the game, whose odds are constantly rigged against them.

Here is how fear works in the brain, which we now know is comprised of three parts, one enfolded inside the other. As all organisms evolve, the tendency is to hang onto old outmoded structures, adding to and improving, rather than casting them off altogether, which is exactly what happened with the human brain. The innermost core of the brain, located at the base of the skull, is aptly named the reptilian brain. This ancient control center auto-pilots the central nervous system and manages our vast array of survival instincts and behaviors. When we are generally at peace with ourselves and our environment, the reptilian brain plays a supporting role in deference to the higher two brain structures.

Surrounding the primitive reptilian is what is known as the old mammalian brain, sometimes referred to as the limbic system. Here is the source of our awareness, emotions and our intuition—where crude reptilian instincts are transformed into true intelligence which can be applied to complex life situations. The limbic system maintains the immune system and the body's capacity to heal itself. Finally, five times larger than its predecessors combined, there is the newest brain, or neocortex, whose job is to integrate the input from its junior partners. Here is the source of our inventiveness and creative thinking and problem-solving abilities. Again, when all is well, there is a general flow of energy and information from the inside to the outside, with the lower structures working in support of their new master, the neocortex, which artfully sees to a person's continued well-being.

Now, let's bring fear into the picture: introduce a sufficient stress or threat and the brain goes into full retreat. Leslie Hart, author of Human Brain and Human Learning, an advocate for what he terms "brain-compatible education," calls this negative reflex "downshifting." I imagine a speeding locomotive thrown into reverse without first slowing down and coming to a halt, with all of that momentum going into miles of wheel spinning before there is any actual change of direction. Suddenly, all of the developmental powers of the higher two brains place themselves in the service of their reptilian core, fueling the individual's territoriality and other primitive drives and defenses. Watching ten minutes of world or local news on any given night will confirm the reality of this basic biological survival mechanism.

Or just observe for a day the antics of a "slow learner" or of a "problem child" in any traditional classroom in America. I am purposely avoiding the use here of any of the new, hyper-specific labels invented to rationalize the epidemic failure of children to thrive in our schools and to throw parents who might otherwise manage to keep their wits about them off of the scent. The now old-fashioned term for this is "blaming the victim." In *The Learning Mystique: A Critical Look at Learning Disabilities*, written as his PhD thesis while at Harvard University, Robert Coles proposes that the whole labeling system, beginning with "dyslexic," then moving on to "learning disabled," and since refined to the point of absolute absurdity, is simply a clever and consciously contrived way for schools to give middle-class parents who are immune to the "culturally disadvantaged" myth a palatable explanation for why their Johnnies can't read yet.

The real problem, however, is that we then have a real-life self-fulfilling prophecy on our hands. The news that their child isn't developing "normally" is frightening to parents, understandably so. Scared parents then scare their kids and we now know, thanks to recent brain research, exactly what takes place inside all of those frightened young minds as they begin to apply all of the resourcefulness and creativity of their modern brains towards the resistance to the learning game being played in the classroom. If you've never watched this totally reflexive mechanism in action, then you've missed out on an important object lesson. All I have to do is close my eyes and remember back to a time years ago when I naively attempted to "teach" subjects like reading or the multiplication tables—humanely, of course—to a group of public school cast-offs. I'll never forget Tommy, in particular, who, ironically, was the one kid who had never been to public school. Tommy's divorced father was from conservative, working-class Irish-Catholic stock, and frequently expressed vocal concern about his first-born son's lack of academic progress. Tommy was a passive resister, adaptively smiling his way through each lesson, yet growing steadily "dumber" by the minute. I patiently employed every creative teaching trick that I had ever learned, but he never did learn those times tables. I was finally rescued by his impatient and critical father, who did not hesitate to fault me and our school for its lack of discipline and academic rigor, and who finally insisted that the boy go to a "regular" school, where thankfully he is now both a reasonably successful student and an accomplished high school athlete. In Tommy's case, the change to a more conventional school resulted in improvement in his schoolwork for two primary reasons, I think. First of all, Tommy's dad was both pleased and relieved at the move, and so Tommy no longer had to carry the burden of his father's anxiety and displeasure. In addition, the atmosphere and ethic of the new public school were more consonant with the father's belief system, where school is work and work is something that you have to do, so you damn well better just do it. No longer allowed the choice not to do it, Tommy just got busy doing what the other kids were doing. This removed a major thorn in the all-important relationship between father and son, which alone made the change in schools a very good thing for Tommy.

The preceding story also brings us back to the question of what role fear plays in a "free school" like ours, where there is no grading or coercion, and where learning is regarded as a natural, joyful process seldom requiring adult intervention. While our informal, organically structured and family-like school environment usually readily defuses the stored-up fear in a child coming to us from public school, we often seem to have the opposite effect on the parent(s). The litany of questions, spoken or unspoken, which reflect their fear goes something like this: Where are the desks? What about homework? What if he/she just decides to play all day? How will I know my child is learning if there are no report cards? What will happen when my child goes back to a regular school?

Now, I don't mean to say that these are not all legitimate questions, appropriate expressions of concern about the future of a child. I always try to answer them compassionately, sometimes addressing the subject of fear head-on, and at other times coming at it in a more roundabout way, depending on the degree of the fear that I feel is contained in the questions. My twenty-one years of wrestling with this subject have taught me that this corrosive fear transcends all race and class lines. The one determinant that I have been able to recognize that doesn't lead into murky psychological realms—and to levels where I have no "contract" to work with parents—is the parents' own schooling histories. When I can get overly-anxious parents talking about their childhood experiences in school, the seeds of their current worry are often quite obvious. I discover that they went through one form or another of the same struggles that their kids are undergoing, and that they, too, had parents who were anxious about their educational development. Here, then, is a classic example of how the fear I am talking about indeed feeds upon itself; and in fact, lives to see not just another day, but another entire generation.

Long ago at The Free School, we realized, especially where a child's growth has been decidedly interrupted, that our task is as much to work with the parents as it is with their kids—and I mean work to relieve them of their fears about their children's ability to learn. Yes, it's important that parents read to and talk with their children, that they be consistent and non-abusive in their discipline at home, and so on and so forth. But even abusiveness is often rooted in deep-seated fear; and again, it is fear which scrambles and fogs vulnerable young brains, and fear which throws the entire developmental vehicle into neutral or even reverse.

When talking with fearful parents, I always try to keep in mind and in some way to communicate to them something that I once heard Joseph Chilton Pearce, internationally known lecturer on human development and author of books such as *The Magical Child, The Crack in the Cosmic Egg,* and most recently, *Evolution's End*, say at a workshop for teachers here in Albany a few years back. The condensed version is that all children are "hard-wired to learn," which simply means that our in-born programming automatically gears us for learning, a process that we now know begins *in utero*, to a truly astonishing degree. So, it becomes more a question of how we manage to keep a child from learning, rather than one of how they learn in the first place. Pearce's belief, based on extensive new research into the psycho-biology of the mind, is that each child already contains his or her God-given potential, and that what we call "learning" is just the natural unfolding of that potential. This, of course, brings us back to the true meaning of the word "education," which derives from the Latin, educare, meaning, "To lead out." Also, Pearce's recent work in synthesizing the theories of quantum physics and the astounding recent discoveries about the functioning of the human brain tends to confirm Piaget's less "scientific" model of the developmental stages that all children pass through, each at her or his own pace.

Chilton Pearce added one important qualifier to his notion of "hard-wired" learning, which was that it will unfold if—and only if—the environment supports and resonates with children according to their individual natures and to their locations in their own developmental processes. It's not hard to see that this is a monumental "if." The learning which is already occurring in the womb, with the fetus responding to all sorts of cues from the mother's body—heartbeat, voice, emotional states, etc.—as well as to the voices of father and siblings, and which is predestined to continue and accelerate right from the moment of birth, is in so many cases crashingly interrupted by the mindless practices of the "modern" hospital. The newborn infant's early developmental surge depends entirely on immediate and adequate bonding with the mother. Recent biophysical research has determined that it is proper skin-to-skin contact, continued contact with the mother's heartbeat, and plenty of loving, non-anxious eye contact that triggers the rapid hormonal and neurological changes which underlie the crucial early development of the neocortex.

Interestingly, this discussion brings me onto the subject of my wife Betsy's career playing field. Betsy is what is known today as a "direct-entry midwife," meaning that she got her training via apprenticeship with veteran midwives, and has shared with me many of her experiences from the amazing world of childbirth. We are continually finding new parallels and connections between related areas of concern in our work, and if anything, she ends up having to deal directly with the inhibitory and suppressive effects of fear more than I do. My wife began by helping the founder of the Free School, Mary Leue, set up a meeting place for pregnant women, their partners and their childre. This led her to nursing school and then to a job as an obstetrical nurse in a conventional hospital delivery room. Appreciative of the valuable, paid training that she was receiving there, she stuck with that job as long as her conscience would allow her. Over time, she became increasingly appalled by the number of times and ways in which the nurses and doctors interrupted and interfered with the mother while she was giving birth. A distressing but important lesson that was repeated again and again before this midwife-to-be was how fear slowed down or altogether stopped the process of labor. And, it was all too clear that it was the hospital environment itself which was causing much of that fear. Then, even more disturbing to her was the way the newborn baby was treated after it was born, with one invasive routine procedure after another—shots, eye drops, blood tests, exams—all performed with little or no regard for the subjective effects of all this on the baby.

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Medical science continues to have little regard for babies as feeling human beings, and childbirth continues to be approached by mainstream practitioners as though it were a pathological, rather than a natural, healthy process; in most cases requiring little if any professional intervention at all. And all of this, in my belief, is due to fear—fear that something might go wrong and fear of malpractice lawsuits perhaps being the chief ones. Then, either underlying or at least accompanying that fear is a deep distrust of the mother. During childbirth, so many of the routine practices are based on the assumption that a woman does not know her own body, and therefore will not be able to accomplish her task without all sorts of "assistance." Once the baby is on the outside, a new unexpressed assumption kicks in that the world is a dangerous, germ-infested place from which the mother might not know how to protect her baby, and so the hospital staff takes over in that department as well.

Call it fear; call it distrust; call it whatever you want—the result is always the same. In the name of safety and prevention, what ends up being prevented is the natural flow of biological events within and between mother and baby, and the "hard-wired" (to borrow Pearce's term) mother/infant bond which is the logical outcome of those events. What comes to mind here is something I once heard one of my wife's mentors—French obstetrician-turned-midwife Dr. Michel Odent—say a number of years ago at a workshop here which my wife organized. Commenting on the horrifying plethora of ways in which a hospital succeeds in obstructing the delicate and all-important mother/infant bonding process, Odent went so far as to claim that this amounts to a conspiracy on the part of the society to separate children from their parents and particularly to suppress the feminine nature in both little boys and little girls.

I have since heard John Taylor Gatto, former New York State Teacher of the Year, turned author and nationally recognized critic of compulsory education in the U.S., passionately decry this to be the very same mission being carried out by another monolithic American social institution—the public school system. There are numerous parallels between the hospital's approach to childbirth and conventional schooling's approach to learning—and the existence of a correlation between the high Cesarean section rate and the number of children in special education programs in the U.S. should be sought out—but this is a subject for another time.

According to Joseph Chilton Pearce, a great many children never truly recover from the setbacks caused by the early trauma surrounding their births, which is then reinforced by other harmful cultural practices such as the impersonal daycare system so often called on to substitute for working parents, the image-robbing and mind-numbing effects of television, and the now well-documented stunting impact of premature academic training. He lets teachers and schools off the hook somewhat by saying that their job today is next to impossible because so many kids are "damaged goods," and essentially buries individual blame entirely, choosing instead to focus on the now totally unnecessary perpetuation of ignorance—by the culture as a whole—around basic life processes such as learning. This is important, I think, because blame—though always a temptation easy to indulge in—certainly will never lead us out of the labyrinth in which we now find ourselves almost hopelessly lost.

The way out, I believe, lies in the direction of putting our fears—both individual and collective—back in their rightful places, and then taking back control over our families' lives. Trust is the true antidote to fear, and I can recall a recent poignant example which illustrates what I mean. A group of kids asked me start up a math class at the Free School last winter, and at the very beginning of the first session, I noticed that the student whose idea the class had originated with was sitting at the table crying. Tears were pooling up on the old, tattered workbook that she had brought with her, a relic of an earlier time when she had struggled with learning arithmetic and reading, eventually deciding to put the math entirely aside for awhile.

Referring back to brain structure, we also now know that there is an approximate division of labor between the right and left hemispheres of the neo-cortex, which is actually the only part of the brain involved in the acquisition of so-called "academic skills." The left side is responsible for linear and sequential thinking, and therefore is heavily involved in the "Three R's;" while the right side, working in wholes rather than bits, specializes in the recognition of patterns, and is the half most active when we are engaged in art, movement and music. In my experience, some kids tend to be fairly balanced in the functioning of the two halves of their neo-cortexes, while others have tend to favor one side over the other to varying degrees.

Abby is a classic example of a what I call a "right brained kid." She is an accomplished artist, having begun exhibiting an extraordinary talent for drawing and painting at a very young age. She was also attracted to dance and became the youngest member of her church choir last year. Though not uninterested in reading and coming from a reading family, Abby had had great difficulty "breaking the code" in the early elementary grades. This, naturally, aroused concern in her parents, and to a certain extent, in her teachers as well. Thanks to good communication and rapport between home and school, we all did a fairly good job of keeping our fear in check; but unfortunately, the picture was not this simple. As is so often the case, when an extended family member, influential friend, or outside "expert" will add their worry to the mix, Abby's grandmother—a retired remedial reading specialist—became quite alarmed when Abby reached the age of eight or so and was still not reading much. Abby, indeed, was exhibiting textbook "symptoms" of "dyslexia" like letter, number and word reversals, and the inability to transfer what she had managed to retain from one level to the next.

Although, as I stated above, I don't give much credence to labels like dyslexia, I didn't in any way discount the grandmother's feelings. In fact, at one point we invited her to come to the school to give us a workshop on remedial reading, an experience which lessened her anxiety considerably, I think. The real problem that I saw in this instance was the potential for the transmission of fear to Abby both from her grandmother directly and through her mother (who, naturally, had "inherited" many of her mother's beliefs), resulting in everyone's preoccupation with Abby"s "reading problem" at that tender stage of her development. That, by working together, we were able to resolve a great deal of everyone's anxiety was an important factor in Abby eventually learning to read, I am quite certain. Exactly how she did manage the task I am not at all sure to this day. There were a number of things done to help Abby learn to read, including trying out some of the grandmother's specialized exercises and the employment of a reading tutor (with whom she developed a mutually appreciative relationship!) for a short time. I think it is important to note that nothing was done without Abby's consent and willing participation, so that she was never confronted with having a judgment that she was defective in some way. In the end, she was largely left to learn to read at her own pace and in her own way—aided and abetted by her reading teacher—and learn she did.

To complete this unsolicited sermon on the "teaching" of reading, I want to say that I have no reflexive problem with adults intervening in skillful, creative and caring ways to help a child to learn any new technique. At the same time, careful attention must be given to the spirit in which the assistance is given. Are there any unspoken messages regarding either the competency or the character of the learner hidden in the "remediation" process? Also, how much underlying fear is being passed along, thereby setting in motion the vicious cycle of not-learning described above? I have seen far too many kids who eventually learned to read, but with their desire and joy killed in the process, which was turned into a knockdown, drag-out affair because of all the fear-based urgency surrounding the situation. My current belief is that a team of wild horses wasn't going to keep Abby from learning to read; she simply needed to be ready first. Thankfully, today, Abby is a voracious reader, and due to her ready access to the right hemisphere of her neo-cortex, she is an award-winning young poet and a writer of clever short stories as well.

There is a twin-headed dragon still terrorizing up to fifty percent of the students in our public schools—the ones determined by the school to be "underachievers." One head continues to believe, all the recent reforms and innovations notwithstanding, that children should be expected to learn in the same (always left-brained) way at the same time. The other believes, in true Hobbesian fashion, that children are essentially nasty, brutish and short creatures, who left to their own devices can't be trusted to learn a damn thing.

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And kids know this, though most can't tell anyone that they do—above all not their parents. Add the bell-curve to those fear-based beliefs and it's no wonder that "special education" has also become a growth industry as we approach the end of the twentieth century.

Meanwhile, back to Abby, whom we left in a puddle of tears in our math class. Abby's impetus to request the class had come from her decision that it was time to "catch up" on her math skills now that she was thirteen and considering going on to the public high school in the next year or so. Seeing her crying quietly at the table, I sat down next to her and asked her what the matter was. She answered that she was afraid that she couldn't learn math, that it was just too hard for her. We talked about her earlier difficulties with both reading and math, and I reminded her how quickly she had learned to read once she was ready. In order to reassure her that it was OK that she was just setting out to tackle her math, I told her that she had been wise to wait until the math learning circuits in her brain were completed. We agreed the fear that she couldn't learn math was the big problem, and I suggested that she begin with memorizing the multiplication tables, after which I claimed, everything else would be downhill from there. It only took her a couple of days to do it, and Abby has been sailing along ever since. She will undoubtedly be ready for high school when that day arrives.

The moral of Abby's story —and I could tell many more just like it—is that learning, like childbirth, is a perfectly natural, healthy process, and children can be trusted to monitor and manage their own educational growth and development. Of course they need good role models, occasional guidance and challenge, and access to books, materials, and equipment, but it must be remembered that the best motivation to

learn comes from within. The ever-increasing number of self-taught walkers and talkers crowding the planet today being ample proof of that fact. (There's an old joke that says if walking and talking were skills that required teaching to children, then there would be an awful lot more silent people in wheelchairs out there today.)

The point is that when children are truly extended trust and are allowed to be responsible for themselves, they learn more quickly and more easily, and the learning tends to be for life and not just until the end of the marking period. In a recent and startling book called *Punished By Rewards: The Trouble With Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, "A's," Praise and Other Bribes*, author Alfie Kohn cites study after study documenting the reality that individuals who perform tasks in order to receive extrinsic rewards do far less well than those who are self-motivated and who find their satisfaction in the activity itself. The inhibitory effects of negative reinforcement were demonstrated many decades ago by B.F. Skinner, the inventor of the branch of psychology called behaviorism which continues to provide the rationale for the methodology of conventional schooling; but now Kohn's research reveals that even such simple forms of positive reinforcement as praise can hamper learning and achievement. And the reason, I am convinced, is fear, which we now know, thanks to theorists like Pearce and Hart, is biologically incompatible with learning. All too often, managed, monitored and measured learning environments like most modern schools communicate an unspoken fear-based dependency that says that without all the structured trappings, nothing constructive would happen. Left to their own devices, kids would just goof off all day; or worse still, they would run wild like a pack of wolves à la William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. In either case, they would never be prepared to face "the real world"—whatever that might be. Besides being very smart, kids are sensitive to these invisible signals. Far too many respond accordingly, only to be labeled as deficient in some way, setting in motion the vicious cycle of "failure" which often follows them throughout their lives.

The fear-based belief that our children must begin performing academically at a young age has a long reach. Antonio's father, an assistant professor at a local university, once asked me in all seriousness how I expected his son to manage as an adult if he could not read. Antonio, a first-grader at the time, was another typically "right brained" kid in no hurry to begin reading on his own, who, instead would spend hours either building great structures in our woodshop or concocting far-out, imaginative fantasy games with his age-mates. There was Antonio, highly intelligent and verbal, and yet his inability to read at age seven had triggered the most catastrophic of fears in his well-educated father. However, fear out in the open is far easier to deal with than fear that is unexpressed and hidden away; thus I was able to reassure Antonio's dad in the space of a one-hour conference, predicting that by age ten Antonio's learning curve would begin to match up with, if not exceed his peers. As surprised as I was by the degree of the father's anxiety, I was equally grateful for his willingness to explore it, and then more or less put it to rest.

We are not always as fortunate as we were with Antonio and his family, and we end up "losing" kids whose parents can't find their way to trust that their kids will learn what they need to learn when they need to learn it, given the time and the space in which to operate. And our reluctance to issue what I call conventional schooling's "reassurance policy"—the compulsory classes, the endless repetition, the graded tests and papers, and so on—certainly doesn't help matters much. We've yet to find a universal solution to this year-in and year-out problem; and meanwhile, it's one that we just do the best we can with. We have learned that maintaining open communication is the key. This establishes the trust that enables parents to hang in there while their kids build the kind of permanent foundation beneath themselves that will support them throughout their adult lives. I have had the privilege over the past twenty-one years of watching hundreds of children—of every imaginable shape, size, race, religion and social class—slowly constructing their own authentic selves. The continual beauty—and the occasional miraculousness of the process—have helped me to put a great many of my fears to rest, making me a much more relaxed and effective teacher than when I first began. Nevertheless, fear, which behaves much like a radioactive isotope with a very long half-life, often continues to rear its ugly head somewhere deep inside, challenging me, like Max in Sendak's classic, *Where the Wild Things Are*, to stare it down and order it to "BE STILL!" so that I can get on with the joyful business of living and learning.

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THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: A SOCIAL DIAGNOSIS

by André Houle

A review of student academic performance in the United States provides pertinent information. Over the past 30 years student SAT scores have been declining: average verbal scores have fallen over 50 points, and mathematics scores have dropped nearly 40 points. (Ornstein, Levine, 1989, p. 514). A recent study performed in Massachusetts by the Department of Education (1992), determined that 71 percent of high school seniors tested were unable to think critically or apply knowledge. Interestingly however, compensating for inflation, over the past 30 years the number of dollars spent per student in the United States has increased nearly 2+1/2 times (National Center for Education Statistics, 1993).

An interesting paradox seems to be presented above: Why has student academic performance significantly declined when 2+1/2 times the money has been devoted to their education? An answer to this question and a means of dealing with this problem are presented in this paper.

A landmark study, known as the Coleman Report (Coleman, 1966) studied the academic performance of over 645,000 students (lst, 3rd, 6th, 9th, and 12th grade) in more than 4300 schools nationwide. The study drew an unexpected conclusion as summarized by Block (1983):

> The student's family background is the most influential factor in student achievement. School facilities, curriculum, and teacher characteristics have a comparatively minor influence on student achievement, with teacher characteristics being

the strongest of these three.

In a re-analysis of data from the Coleman Report and a national longitudinal study involving over 100 high schools and many smaller studies, Jenck (1973) concludes:

> School achievement depends largely on a single input, that is, the family characteristics of the students, and all other variables are either secondary or irrelevant.

Further analyses of the Coleman data and additional large scale statistical studies (Mayeske, 1966; Mosteller & Moynihan, 1972; Averch, 1972) determined the student's family background to account for 70% of student performance (Ornstein & Levine, 1989, p. 433)...

Compelling evidence for the above conclusion has also been presented in Hanushek's (1986) exhaustive review of the literature concerning school input (teacher characteristics, curriculum, facilities, etc..) vs student output (student achievement). The results of Hanushek's (1986) review of 147 studies as stated by Deller, 1993:

> ...these studies are "startlingly consistent" in finding no strong empirical evidence that traditional school inputs have the expected positive influence on student performance. In addition, there appears to be no strong evidence suggesting that higher levels of pupil expenditures are associated with higher student achievement.

Since the family is the major factor affecting student achievement, as the studies above have concluded, a review of the American family in the areas of child/adolescent behavior and family stability is in order.

Concerning adolescent behavior, the following chart (Toch, 1993) discusses the top disciplinary problems at school according to public school teachers: 1940 vs 1990:

1940:

- Talking out of turn
- Chewing gum
- Making noise
- Running in the halls
- Cutting in line
- Dress-code violations

1990:

- Assault
- Robbery
- Drug abuse
- Alcohol abuse
- Pregnancy
- Suicide

The following are the results of an international study of homicide rates among young males 15 to 24 years of age in twenty-one developed countries (Fingerhut, 1990). The results: the homicide rate for young males in the United States is the highest among industrialized nations. The homicide rate in the U.S. (21.9 per 100,000) is more than 10 times higher than the average homicide rate of the other twenty one industrialized nations (2 per 100,000)...

The following information was released by the FBI concerning violence in youth:

Between 1988 and 1992, the juvenile arrest rate for murder, robbery, and assault increased by 50%. From 1980 to 1990, a 79% increase in the number of juveniles committing murder with firearms was observed. Since 1965, the juvenile arrest rate for violent crime has tripled. Although the exact cause of this increase in juvenile violence cannot be determined, the proliferation of illegal drugs and firearms, and a three-fold increase in single parent families since 19s0, may be factors.

The following viewpoint was expressed by Toufexis (1989) concerning this noticeable increase in juvenile violence:

> Society has generally been able to control and channel aggressive impulses through basic institutions - home, schools, and church. But those moral pillars are crumbling. Too many children are growing up in families headed by one overburdened parent, usually the mother. Even when two parents are present, they often have demanding jobs and are absorbed in their own concerns. Sometimes the parents are strung out on drugs or alcohol. The result is that children don't get the

nurturing, guidance or supervision necessary to instill a proper set of values and a proper code of behavior.

The entertainment media play a powerful role in the formation of values. Today's childen, unlike those of earlier generations, are fed a steady diet of glorified violence. By the age of 16, the typical child has witnessed an estimated 200,000 acts of violence, including 33,000 murders.

The following are the results of a study (Hickey, 1992a) concerning the number of violent acts that occur on television over the course of the average day:

During 18 hours (6 AM to midnight) on April 2, 1992, the following ten channels in Washington D.C. were analyzed: ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS, Fox, WDCA, WTBS, USA Network, MTV and HBO. The results were:

A total of 1,846 acts of violence were recorded: 175 of which resulted in one or more fatalities. 389 scenes depicting serious assault. 362 scenes involving gun play. 673 depictions of punching, pushing, dragging or other hostile acts. These results average to 10 violent acts per hour, 1 every six minutes.

In another study, Gay in 1989 tracked the occurence of violence and crime over a one-week period during primetime (8:00 PM to 11:00 PM) on the three major networks, ABC, NBC, CBS. The finding: 382 acts of violence; 56 people were killed. That averages to a violent act every ten minutes, and just under one death per hour.

A statistic perhaps more important than the amount of violence presented on television is the amount of time that children spend watching television: children in the U.S. watch television an average of 25 hours a week (Corporation for Public Broadcasting, 1988). That averages to 3+1/2 hours per day. Preschool children watch more television than the average at 30 hours a week (Guddemi, 1986). Teenagers watch TV a little less at 23 hours per-week

(Thompson, 1991). Adults also average 30 hours per week (Thompson, 1991).

For clarity, the above information is summarized below:

average TVviewing:

hours per week:

all children	25
preschool children	30
teenagers	23
adults	30

hours per day:

all children	3+1/2
preschool children	4+1/2
teenagers	3+1/4
adults	4+1/2

According to Leibert (1988), by the time a child reaches the age of 18, he/she will probably have spent more time watching television than in in any other activity except for sleep.

A significant question to ask at this point is: does exposure to violence on television increase the occurence of violence in society? After 30 plus years of research, the answer is yes.

A classic study in the early 1960s on this issue (Bandura, 1961) involved children 3 to 5 years old. Children observing violent behavior in adults shortly thereafter produced/imitated those same violent behaviors. Two years later a similar study was performed (Bandura, 1963). The only difference was that children observed violence on a television screen rather than in person. The results were the same—children imitated the violent behavior to which they were exposed.

In another classic study (Joy, 1986) a small town in Canada acquired television for the first time in 1973. The impact of television on this community was compared to two similar communities that already had television. First and second grade students were observed over a two-year period for rates of physical aggression, i.e., hitting, biting, shoving, etc... Rates of physical aggression did not change among the two control groups. Two years after the introduction of television in the experimental group, rates of physical aggression

Two years after the introduction of television in the experimental group, rates of physical aggression among children increased by 160%. Restated, after two years of novel exposure to television, children in the experimental group performed physically aggressive acts 2.6 times more than they did before being exposed to television.

A most conclusive longitudinal study was performed by Leonard D. Eron (1987). The study began in 1960 involving over 600 children between the ages of 7 and 9 and now contains over 22 years worth of data. The conclusion: early television viewing habits correlate directly to aggressive behavior 22 years later—

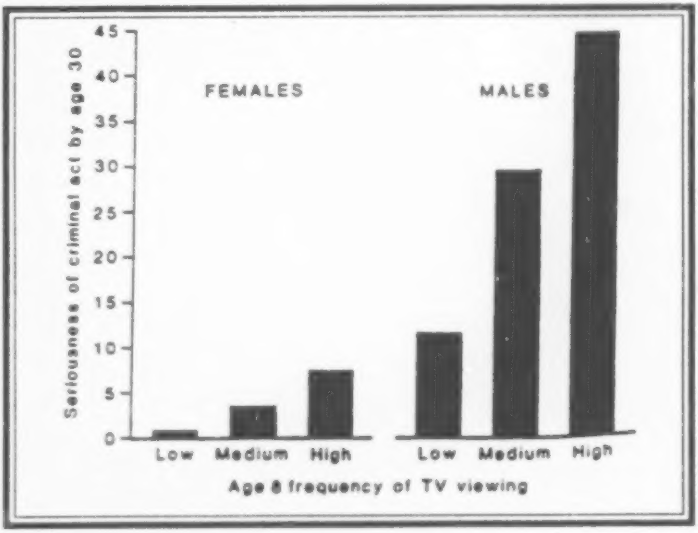

Figure 1

(Seriousness of crimes refers to a score assigned to each crime according to a system used by the New York State Criminal Justice Division in which each type of offense is assigned a specific seriousness.)

the more frequently youngsters watched TV at age 8, the more serious were the crimes for which they were convicted by age 30. See figure 1.

This study with similar results was replicated in Chicago, Australia, Finland, Israel and the Netherlands (Huesmann, 1984).

In summary, the following scientifically obtained information proves that violence in television does indeed increase the occurrence of violence in society:

—Children observing violent behavior on television later imitated those violent behaviors to which they were exposed.

—After two years of novel exposure to television, children performed physically aggressive acts 2.6 times more frequently than they did prior to exposure to television.

—The more frequently children watched television at age 8, the more serious were the crimes for which they were convicted by age 30.

For further proof of this conclusion, refer to Comstock's (1987) *Television and Children: A Review of Recent Research*.. An exhaustive review of 249 studies in this area is provided.

Dr. Leonard Eron perhaps says it best:

There can no longer be any doubt that heavy exposure to televised violence is one of the causes of aggressive behavior, crime, and violence. The evidence comes from both laboratory and real life studies. Television violence affects youngsters of all ages, of both genders, at all socioeconomic levels, and all levels of intelligence (Hickey, 1992a).

To put the situation in numerical terms, Dr. Eron estimates "that fully 10% of the actual violence in our society is attributable to the viewing of violence on television" (Hickey, 1992b).

A question to ponder at this point is whether violence on television is the primary cause of violence in the United States. Or whether violence on television may be exacerbating a more fundamental flaw in our society.

Let us review family stability in the United States.

The following diagram shows the pattern of divorce over the past 70 years (Wetzel, 1990):

An interpretation of Figure 2 is presented in the chart below. Note the increasing ratio of the number of divorces compared to the number of marriages (increasing divorce rate) over the past 70 years:

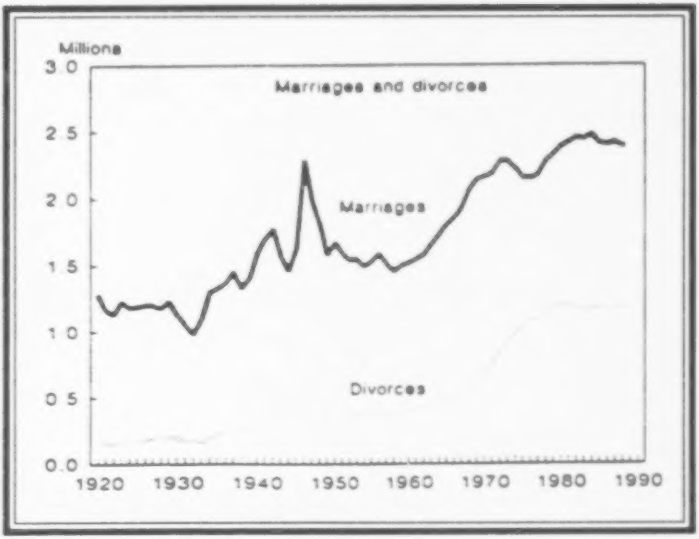

Figure 2

millions
# of divorces
# of marriages = ratio

year	
1920	0.2/1.25 = 0.16
1930	0.2/1.00 = 0.20
1940	0.25/1.5 = 0.17
1950	0.35/1.6 = 0.22
1960	0.40/1.5 = 0.27
1970	0.60/1.8 = 0.33
1980	1.00/2.2 = 0.45
1990	1.00/2.3 = 0.43

Note on this chart a near 3-fold increase in the divorce rate from 1920 to 1980. The greatest 10 year increase in the rate of divorce occurs between 1970 and 1980. Showing a steady increase since 1920, note that through the 80s and into the 90s the divorce rate has leveled off a significantly higher rate. At this rate, more than half of all marriages are expected to end in divorce.

With this in mind, further analysis of the present condition of the American family is in order:

Today, about 30% of families with children under the age of 18 are single parent families, up from 9% percent in 1960 (U.S. Census Bureau). Nearly 60 percent of all children born in 1986 may spend 1 year or longer in a single parent family before reaching the age of eighteen (Kerka, 1988). This increase in the single parent family is usually the result of birth out of wedlock, separation, or divorce. Particularly among teenage mothers, out of wedlock births has increased explosively from 16 percent in 1960 to 54 percent in 1983 (Ornstein & Levine, 1989, p. 374). The vast majority of single parent families are low-income families consisting of the mother with relatively little formal education and her children (Kerka, 1988). Review of the literature on single parent families shows that children from one parent households have lower levels of socio-emotional development and academic achievement, (Dawson, 1981). The above information provides further evidence of the breakdown of the American family, and consequences thereof.

To continue, many families today are in crisis and the effect on children is staggering—the three main stressors of children and families today are divorce, violence, and lack of communication (O'Brien, 1990). Some studies indicate a decline in the influence of family to the point where children turn to friends for assistance and moral support rather than to their parents (Ornstein & Levine, 1989 p. 374). Many reports indicate that children prefer watching television rather than being with their parents (Morrison, 1981). The bottom line is expressed by Fontana (1986): "America's children and their families are in trouble, trouble so deep as to pose a serious threat to the future of our society."

In summary, this information concerning divorce rates and the present status of the American family addresses a pertinent subject: the disintegration of the American family.

A review of the information presented in this paper is summarized below:

—40 to 50 point decline in student SAT scores over the past 30 years.

—inability of 71 percent of high school seniors tested to think critically

—2+1/2 times the amount of money spent per student on education today vs 30 years ago.

—The Coleman Report: The student's family background is the most influential factor in student achievement.

—The top disciplinary problems according to public school teachers: 1940 vs 1990; talking out of turn vs assualt, chewing gum vs robbery, etc...

—Homicide rate in American youth: 10 times greater than that of other industrialized nations.

—The FBI reported a 79% increase since 1980 in juveniles committing murder with firearms, and a 50% increase since 1988 in juvenile arrests for robbery and assault.

—Children average 3+1/2 hours per day watching television—they spend more time watching television than any other activity except sleep.

—Violence on television causes violence in society.

—54% increase in out of wedlock birth among teenage mothers.

—The disintegration of the American family.

CONCLUSION:

The cause of a higher level of violence in the United States is the disintegration of the American family. The void left in the wake of the disintegrated family is filled with the violent influence of television, and is particularly affecting children. Violence in television is then not the primary cause of violence in our society.

Symptoms of the disintegration of the American family presented include a drastic change in disciplinary problems at school, a homicide rate 10 times greater among American youth compared to other nations, an increase in juvenile murders with firearms, and a 50% increase in juvenile robbery and assault. Other symptoms include a significant decline in SAT scores over the past 30 years and the inability of 71% of high school seniors tested to think critically.

Other symptoms of our society's illness, although not discussed in depth in this paper, may also include the prevalence of drug abuse and drug wars, and overcrowded prisons.

SOCIAL DIAGNOSIS:

Illness:

disintegration of the American family.

Exacerbating factor: violence on television—for children, the void left in the wake of the disintegrated family is filled with violence on television.

Symptoms:

— drastic change in disciplinary problems at school

— marked increase in violent crimes among youth

— significant decline in student SAT scores

— inability of 71 percent of high school seniors to think critically

Other probable symptoms:

— prevalence of drug abuse and drug wars

— overcrowded prisons

The cure for the illness of our society, the disintegration of the American Family, is not immediately apparent. A discussion among citizens of the United States with the intent of changing our present social and economic conditions with the intent of re-establishing the American family may be in order.

The family is the base of society. Exactly how far the illness, if left untreated, will affect our society, perhaps only the future will tell us....

DISCUSSION:

The following are a number of ideas concerning the re-establishment of the American Family. They do not cover all possible ideas and are presented only to intiate discussion concerning the re-establishment of the American Family:

- **Hammer out a prenuptial agreement, review it annually. If there is no alternative but to divorce, assets can be divided according to this mutally consented contract.**
- **Restructure school scheduling: make class from 9 AM to 5 PM so a parent can arrive home from work at about the same time as the kids. Or lengthen the school year.**
- **Stop watching so much TV and spend some time playing with your kid, like with building blocks or toys, playing games outside, or reading books aloud and stuff.**
- **One spouse working, one spouse care for children.**

One spouse work full time, one part-time. On days both work, bring kids to daycare.

- **On days off, spend time with kids.**

Shift work schedules around so one can be with the child all the time.

- **Be in a flexible profession where an office/work station can be at home, like tele-marketing or accounting.**
- **When necessary, care for kids, when not, work.**
- **Have grandparents care for kids while both parents are working—they may have reached retirement and are looking for something to do.**
- **Research innovative American companies that are implementing programs that are helping employees deal with family issues. Like Stride Rite, the children's shoe store that has recently opened an on-site daycare center that serves children and elders in the same facility. Such practices have been shown to attract and retain high quality employees and increase worker productivity (Atkins, 1993).**
- **Discuss these family issues with friends. Perhaps form a neighborhood organization.**

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With special thanks to Marie Malloy and René Houle.

***André Houle** tells us about himself that at the age of thirty he is going for his Masters in Elementary Education after having received a Bachelor of Science in biochemistry, that he began his student teaching with a fourth grade class a week before Christmas, and that things are going quite well. Let's hope he doesn't lose his nerve!*

André's article on world-wide family patterns and traditions compared with ours in the U.S. will come out in the summer issue of ΣΚΟΛΕ.

Ernest and Christine Morgan
MID-YEAR LETTER

June. 1994

To Our Friends:

Greetings!

Here we are again with the annual Morgan Family letter, intended to preserve and enhance our bonds with our friends.

Christine is 90 and Ernest will start his 90th year next month. He likes to brag about having a great granddaughter (Erika Newby) who's a college senior—and an honor student. Grandson Eric Hart's marriage to Pam Laser was a highlight, precipitating a family reunion in August in Vermont.

The major event in our lives during the past year was the death, in October, of Ernest's brother Griscom. Enclosed is a leaflet about him.

An important event in Ernest's life was his retirement from chairmanship of the board of the Antioch Publishing Company (formerly Antioch Bookplate Company). He did this because he was reluctant to leave Christine two days each month.

The occasion of his retirement was celebrated in Yellow Springs, where the mayor declared "Ernest Morgan Day" and a huge public dinner was held, plus a special stockholders meeting at which Ernest spoke. For the occasion, Vicki assembled a marvelous album of mementos of Ernest's career.

He won't be seriously missed on the board. Most of the problems and decisions were beyond his knowledge and experience. His major contribution, aside from lending a touch of historic atmosphere, was to get the meetings over by five o'clock.

Ernest, together with Walter Kahoe, started the company in 1926. The first year's sales were $400 and these slowly reached $300,000 by 1970 when Lee took over. Lee added new products and acquired subsidiaries, to form "Antioch Worldwide." Sales in 1993 were $44,000,000. However, the losses of one subsidiary absorbed most of the earnings. We'll see if Lee can turn that around.

Celo Printing, which operates under Ernest's management, suffered a setback. A new type of convention badge came on the market which knocked out our badge business, which had been the printshop's major source of income. Ernest has ideas for new products which may exceed the badge business—but they're down the road a ways.

Ernest continues as corresponding secretary of Celo Community, answering a steady flow of inquiries. The Community has a long waiting list. So Ernest's role is to be cordial, helpful—and discouraging.

Alabaster Village, Christine's story of her years in Transylvania, is still seeking a publisher. Curiously, the publishers seem enthusiastic, but hesitate to take it on.

After months of patient effort, Ernest finished editing the 13th Edition of his book Dealing Creatively with Death, which has now gone to press. Our friend David Zinn, of Zinn Communications, which publishes the book, had been breathing down Ernest's neck to finish the job. On one occasion Ernest mentioned to him that his autobio was nearly ready, and that he proposed to call it *Dealing Creatively with Life*. After a brief pause David exclaimed, "Oh, no! That must be a separate book!" Ernest rejected the idea at first—then it began to grow on him. Maybe there will be a separate book. In the meantime the autobio is, at last, getting its final touches.

Last month Ernest gave a talk on memorial societies at the annual meeting of the N.C. Association for Death Education and Counseling. He loves to talk, especially about memorial societies, and it's been a while since he's had an audience. They gave him a fee —though he'd have paid for the privilege.

The bad news of the year, in addition to Griscom's death, was that Christine suffered a stroke in early March. After a week in the Spruce Pine Hospital, she was transferred to the Yancey County Nursing Home, where Ernest went every morning to help her with breakfast and stay through noon. Our friends rallied wonderfully under the leadership of Terrilyn West, to take turns helping Christine at supper time, so Ernest was free to go home and pursue his other responsibilities. Under skilled therapy, Christine's condition improved a little and on June 7th we took her home. Ernest has been given detailed instructions for carrying on appropriate therapy.

We have only two regrets about leaving the nursing home. We'll miss the friends we have there, and Ernest will miss the food he took home (against the rules). He didn't buy any food, except two packages of prunes, during the nine weeks that Christine was in the nursing home.

On a cheerful note, Ernest's driver's license was renewed this month with flying colors. Despite diminishing strength and eyesight, he continues writing, setting type, running a press, repairing furniture and cutting grass—not to mention running the kitchen. So, he was ready to take Christine home and assume her care.

Shortly before her stroke Christine had a spell of "remembering," when some of her early poems came back to her. Ernest copied down half a dozen of them and made them into a little booklet along with a biographical sketch and a few other items. If you'd like a copy, let us know. The Arthur Morgan School last month declared Christine their Poet Laureate "for exemplifying poetic beauty, not only in written form, but in life itself."

All lives are temporary, and when we get into our nineties they become even more temporary. This is the 59th annual Morgan family letter. We hope to greet you next year with the 60th—but don't count on it.

History is all of one piece

While we were writing the foregoing message, America was celebrating the 50th Anniversary of "D Day" in World War II when the invasion of Normandy took place. The men who gave their lives in that invasion were celebrated for their part in "saving democracy" and "preserving our way of life." This calls for some thoughtful comment.

Woodrow Wilson took us into World War I with the slogan, "A war to end wars and make the world safe for democracy." And he really meant it. He called for a creative peace with the "self-determination of peoples" and a new era of international cooperation. What went wrong?

The day Wilson died Arthur Morgan happened to be visiting with Ray Stannard Baker who was Wilson's secretary at the close of the war. In the course of that visit he got from Baker an inside glimpse of some important history. Arthur Morgan, by the way, was a founding member and for a time National Secretary, of the League to Enforce Peace which developed the League of Nations idea and sold it to Wilson.

When Wilson went to Versailles he was tired and ill but he carried with him a vision of international friendship and cooperation which would usher in a new age of peace and social justice. But the British and French politicians were intent on carrying forward the blood-stained politics of imperialism. They accepted the League of Nations as a sop to Wilson and then brushed aside his program of peace and justice.

The spoils of war were divided among the victors. The German people were abused and humiliated, and

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starved into submission. This opened the way for the rise of Hitler, the murder of six million Jews, and the onset of the most devastating war in history.

The tragedy of history goes on. We see it now in the Middle East. The Jews, after what they had been through in Europe, would have been more than human if they, in turn, had not developed a terrorist element. Israeli veterans whom I met told me frankly that they used terrorism (the massacre of an Arab village) to drive 200,000 Palestinians from their homes. I was a member of the team that administered relief to those refugees.

Our challenge, in the words of the American Friends Service Committee, is to "give history a new turn." Today we see a glimmer of hope in the Middle East. We may yet witness the emergence of a community of nations there, as occurred in Europe after World War II.

***From* the Yellow Springs News,**
October 28, 1993:

GRISCOM MORGAN

Griscom Morgan, of Yellow Springs, died the evening of October 14th, in the Friends Care Center. He was 81 years of age and had been in failing health for several years.

He was born April 30th, 1912, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the son of Arthur E. and Lucy Griscom Morgan. He came to Yellow Springs in 1921, soon after his father became president of Antioch College.

He graduated from high school at Antioch Academy in Yellow Springs, and attended college at Antioch and at Madison College in Tennessee.

He and his wife, Jane Moore Morgan, were married in 1942. The two of them were principal founders of the Vale Community, just south of Yellow Springs; the Morgans donated the land for the community.

He served as director of

Community Service, Inc., after his father's retirement in the late 1960's.

Griscom Morgan was an early advocate of building a nursing care center in Yellow Springs, and he helped secure the sponsorship of the Friends Care Center by the Yellow Springs Friends Meeting was also a founding member of the local Friends Meeting.

He was a prolific writer of letters-to-the-editor of the *Yellow Springs News.* Principal concerns he raised were: the detrimental effect of population concentrations in cities; the superiority of small schools; reforming our currency so that it would promote economic growth. He was also the author of numerous articles and pamphlets on these and other subjects.

Survivors, in addition to his wife, include: a son, John Morgan, of Raven Rocks Community, Beallsville, Ohio; a daughter, Faith Morgan, and son-in-law. Pat Mulphy, of Occidental, California; a brother, Ernest, and sister-in-law, Christine Morgan, of Celo, North Carolina; a sister Frances Bowling, of Centerville. Indiana; two nephews, Lee Morgan, and his wife Vicki, of Yellow Springs, and Art Morgan and his wife Sherri, formerly of Yellow Springs; a niece Jennifer Morgan, formerly of Yellow Springs; and several other nieces and nephews.

Burial arrangements were made by the Friends Simple Burial Committee.

A memorial service will be held the afternoon of November 13th, at the Friends Meeting House on President Street. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made in Griscom's memory to either Community Service Inc. or the Friends Care Center.

* * *

Almost unknown is the fact that Griscom and Arthur, working together behind the scenes when Antioch was in crisis, had an important hand in saving the college. Griscom also took part in organizing Antioch students, faculty, employees and village alumni in a "Committee for Antioch's Future." From this emerged an official course, Seminar on the Future of Antioch, under the joint leadership of Oliver Loud and Griscom. Details of this period will be found in Antiochiana.

An important event; in Griscom's career was his role in Celo Community. Arthur Morgan, with the support of William Regnery, was planning to launch an "intentional community." Gris was charged with the responsibility of finding a location. He cruised about for six months and finally found an excellent site. He also had a role in launching the community. Today Celo Community is the oldest and most successful land trust community in America.

Griscom was active in the Folk School movement, and served for a time on the staff of Highlander Folk School, at Monteagle, Tennessee.

When Arthur Morgan was called to testify before a Congressional committee, on the TVA, Griscom was right. beside him in a supporting role throughout the hearings. He can be observed there in the documentary film on Arthur's life, "I See a Village."

Gris wrote extensively on economic and sociological matters. Some of the ideas set forth in my recent prize-winning essay on "Restructuring the Economy" came from Gris.

A TRIBUTE TO GRISCOM

by Ernest Morgan

Letters to the Editor:
To the Editor:

My mother died of typhoid fever when I was a few months old. My father (Arthur Morgan) was married again—on my sixth birthday—to Lucy Griscom, for whom Griscom Morgan was named.

When I was seven years old, Lucy told me that I was going to have a little brother or sister. I said, "Yes, I know."

"How did you know?"

"Because I have been praying for one."

So—Griscom was the answer to my prayer. And we enjoyed a congenial childhood and youth.

Once Gris came to my rescue. I had started the Antioch Bookplate Company on a shoestring and had bought my first printing press. It was a small, obsolete machine, built in 1888, and I paid $20 for it. I was so proud of that press!

I hired a man to help me and we took it apart, cleaned it, and painted the parts that called for painting. But we couldn't put it together again. We tried and tried, in vain. I went home that evening in despair, "I don't know what I'm going to do. I can't put the Golding together again!"

The next morning I walked into the shop and there stood the press, fully assembled. My 16-year-old brother had come in during the night, figured it out and put it together.

How was this possible? I know very well how. It was Lucy's doing. She had some off-beat educational ideas, as did Arthur. One of them was to put children at real work. When I was 10 years old she bought a cow and put me in charge. When Gris was entering his teens she arranged for him to be a helper in Ed Hacket's blacksmith shop. With his keen mind he became a mechanical genius.

When Gris finished college I invited him to join me in the Bookplate Company, which he did enthusiastically. His mechanical skill was priceless and he was highly productive—sometimes running three machines at a time!

But he had a health problem and finally dropped out—to the sorrow of both of us. My dad had a theory about that. Gris cleaned machine parts with carbon tetrachloride and even washed his hands with it. We didn't know yet that carbon tet was poisonous. Later, when Gris had surgery, the doctors found damaged tissue, apparently the result of carbon tetrachloride.

One of the most important things Gris did was to stand by his wife, Jane, after she was stricken with polio. With patience and skill, he devised special exercises for her which put her back in circulation after the doctors said it was impossible.

Griscom's fragile health continued throughout his life, but he managed to do many important things, and raised two fine children, John and Faith. I am thankful, for his sake, that he has been released from a growing and hopeless invalidism—but I am sad at his loss.

As we celebrate Griscom Morgan's life, on the occasion of his death, it is not inappropriate that we pay tribute also to Jane, his wife, who stood by him faithfully, in his work and helped him through his health problems with patience and good humor.

It has been Jane, too, who in spite of the handicaps imposed on her by polio, assumed leadership in Community Service, carrying forward successfully an important project launched by Arthur Morgan and contributed to by Griscom.

—Ernest Morgan

From the* Yellow Springs News *for October 21, 1993.

REPRINT:

A Plethora of Inspired Lunoticking from Gene:

HUMAN POTENTIAL HELD BACK BY TECHNOLOGY

by Gene Lehman

(excerpted from*LUNO*, 4/27/94)

Joseph Chilton Pearce [interviewed by Michael Peter Langevin] believes that modern methods of education are just one of many culprits that are holding us back from our potential as human beings.... If Pearce is right, the real problem of overcrowding lies not in our schools, but in the mistaken concepts crowding our own minds.

"Our system has fallen apart not because it's bad—we've never had a good one—but because we have damaged a majority of our children past the point of educability."...

"Early learning is primarily sensory-motor, synchrony of body movement and brain-mind activity....You can force children to employ some capacities ahead of time, but at the cost of those very structures which should be normally unfolding. Interfere with basic development and you get partial or weaker higher development later on." ...

"Ironically, we face technologically induced problems just when these same technologies could free the human spirit from many constraints it has labored under throughout history. Just as we make exciting discoveries about the brain-mind that challenge every notion we have had of ourselves, and get a new look at the real depths of the human spirit, we introduce practices that damage any expression of that spirit. With just a few simple changes, though, we could stop this damage before it starts."...

"Contemplation and meditation open us to these higher operations that are an inherent part of us. Meditation is a part of a child's natural rhythm of mind, when development is proper. But if you try to teach a child meditation, as though it can be schooled into a child, you probably kill it off. Rather than 'teaching the child, we need to give him or her an appropriate nurturing environment."...

[from "Magical Blend" #39 POB 600, Chico, CA 95927 $17/yr in The Firefly, *gen. del., Angle Inlet, MN 56711 #24 Mar. '94.)*

ARE SCHOOLS WORTH SAVING ?

[To *OREGONIAN*:]

Steve Ouin's column (April 10), "Who said schools are worth saving?" degrades a critical problem into personalities. The crucial question is not whether schools are worth saving but whether our school system as presently structured is worth saving or even can be saved. While it is unfair to blame schools, which are a reflection of society, for all the ills of society, there is overwhelming evidence that both schools and society cannot continue much longer on their present degenerative course.

Another major distraction in addressing the role of schools is the focus on funding. There is overwhelming evidence that money is not the important factor in providing education. Family, community and media, far more than any school or system, determine not just the all-important attitude a student brings to learning but, for better or worse, provide most of the content.

A school system that depends on monopolistic control of resources, curriculum and students, along with full power of governmental enforcement, can no longer be sustained economically, intellectually or morally. Modern communication technology and enterprising profiteers are breaking through at all levels of our education system. Unfortunately, this trend is not closing but widening the gap between rich and poor, knowledgeable and deficient, success and failure.

Only an immediate massive restructuring of thinking and schooling can keep our society from deteriorating past the point of any harmonious return. All barriers, structural, economic or psychological, to unlimited learning must be broken. We have superabundant resources but need the resolve to provide the most efficient, effective and inclusive opportunities for all.

Schools can be saved by becoming free from self-serving control and converting to Learning Centers that focus on what is best for the learner rather than the system. We need an Open Network of Learning Centers working cooperatively through every community, every school, every organization, every business and every home.

THE SCHOOLING PROCESS:

Illich defines "schooling" as a "confusion of process and value"—whether it be in the system of education, or in health protection or national security.

John Boston, in his column, "The Boston Forum,"* highlights the above excerpt. After rereading Ivan Illich's *Deschooling Society*, John found that Illich suggested an "edu-credit card ...With this credit anyone could buy what they wanted to know from anyone that would teach it to them."

Before there can be any significant change in the way education is funded, there has first to be a radical change in the way we think about "schooling."

When we confuse the process with the value we get from the institution giving the services, we become "schooled" to believe we cannot do better by ourselves what the institution or professional does. We believe it can only be done by people with certification or diplomas.

Illich calls this result the "hidden curriculum" of the education system.

Besides this "hidden curriculum," this dependency on certified teachers and accredited schools, there is something that is even more hidden, even more subtly sinister: The intimidating process of political domination.

While John and countless others have produced significant "unschooling" results through home education and other digressions from systematic schooling, the political process still deviously distracts all from fully pursuing the freedom to learn and to teach in the way each one of them believes best.

John may be right in believing that when there are simultaneous ballot measures in several states for a voucher system, "soon the teacher's unions could not afford to fight off parental choice." I find little satisfaction in this process. With such a critical need for Education Now, should we be expending so much time, energy and resources in the political process? Whenever any fundamental education issue is played out in the political process, no matter who triumphs, all, especially children, end up losing what is most important: Respect for one another, community solidarity and Truth.

While homeschoolers and private schools have every right to demand their fair share of the money that goes into our government education system, a rudimentary error is in conceding government such power and money. A voucher system simply means getting back some small fraction of what the government takes,with whatever bureaucratic diversion and regulation the system commands.

There is a way, a way with broad appeal, to give people more control of life and learning. An increased personal income tax deduction would give all who pay taxes more power to do what they believe best. Then the crucial problem becomes whether they spend their money wisely or whether they squander it on goods and services that have no lasting personal or public benefit and may even be ultimately destructive to the health and well-being of all. Of course, people will never learn to act wisely unless given the chance to learn from stupid mistakes. Unhappily, history is a record of how little and how slowly we learn from mistakes.

How long will it take to learn the urgency and to find the means of helping those less fortunate, those who have fallen into despair ordesperation, those too poor to worry about paying taxes?Before we can truly change he system, we need to take our own personal and collective resources and reach out to each and everyone in the way we believe best. Until we learn to rely on and fully develop our own potential, we will remain slavishly subject to the system we would change.

❦ ***National Coalition News***, Spring, 94 XVIII:4, NCACS POB 15036 505/474-4312 $20/yr (Non-members)

Deschooling Society 1971, Ivan Illich;

Also see:

"Tools For Conviviality" 1973, Utne Reader Nov/Dec'87;

Growing Without Schooling and ***John Holt's Book & Music Store,*** 2269 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge MA 02140

The following section from LUNO,***which is mainly a review of Gene Marshall's book (q.v.), cries out for an explanation as to its inclusion in ΣΚΟΛΕ. The why of it is simple. This book—Gene (M., not L.) sent me a copy too. You have to understand! This book is like Dan Greenberg's stuff on Sudbury Valley or book put out by the people at the Community School in Camden, Maine, or Claudia Berman's new book on The School Around Us in Kennebunkport!***

This is REAL! This is heart stuff! These people are really living their goodness, their love of life, of people, of the earth. I've been receiving Elizabeth and Gene's newsletter, **Realistic Living,** ***for years! They are like***

Helen and Scott Nearing—they live what they preach! To me, this is what real Christianity is all about. (and yes, you're right: I'm preaching!) Hey—if it helps—I don't give a tinker's dam whether you label your choice for ritual celebration as Christian, Muslim, Judaic, Sufi or follower of the blue skin god (Shiva, the nataraja—one of my personal favorites, has been ever since my days in the Himalayas! Hey, he heard my prayers and let me live! Not everyone can make that statement!) My own choice (when I'm home) happens to be Christian, but my version of that practice might not be recognizable by a lot of other Christians. And that's OK with me. My friend Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi says that to him, religion is like ice cream—it comes in a lot of different flavors. His, he says, is vanilla. Yeah—mine is too! He calls his Judaism. I call mine Christianity. So get hold of this book. LUNO's ***account is accurate but not inspiring. Gene's book is.***

Here's an excerpt from another Christian commentator which LUNO ***uses as an intro to the review:***

THE CHRISTIAN ECONOMIST

Christian activists are more and more seen as screamers, agitators, haters and bigots. They wave the Bible in anger only because they have failed to articulate what they believe, and they cannot explain how their beliefs are relevant to modern public life. We Christians seem to be suffering from a collective inferiority complex that intimidates us and makes us reactionary.

[John White, Christian commentary,***The Christian Economist***, Spring '93 5812 Rt 54, Mechanicsburg, OH 43044 513/ 834-3796)

REVIEW:

T0 BE OR NOT TO BE CHRISTIAN: Meditations and Essays on Authentic Christian Community,

by Gene W.Marshall

1994, 321 pp., PB.
Realistic Living, Rt. 3 Box 104-A 5 Bonham TX 75418
$15+$2 S-H quantity discounts

Reviewed by Gene Lehman:

Gene Marshall boldly explores all sides of the question: How does one resolve a commitment to personal spiritual growth and social responsibility with a Christian heritage that has promoted so much personal repression and community destruction through intimidation, indoctrination and violence?

PART ONE: WHAT IS GOOD RELIGION?

"Good" is used to mean, does it support human authenticity....the self each of us really is in our essential spirit beings?"

1. Toward an Awareness of Human Authenticity.

2. From Transcendence to Transparency in our Basic Spirit Metaphors:

In going from the traditional transcendence metaphor, "a wondrous ability is being given to us for appropriating spirit wisdom from every culture and century of human history."

Living within the transparency metaphor will "enable us to enrich our own motivation to expend our lives with maximum power, compassion, maturity and euphoric delight."

3. In "Evil as Psychological Despair and Sociological Demonry," "evil" is considered the "opposite of authenticity."

The myth of EVIL CHAOS "includes the natural world in all its wildness—the real natural environment of many wondrous species of life in a mysterious ecological wholeness that is beyond human understanding, much less human control....this myth's GOOD CONTROL probably means obeying the headquarters of an oppressive human social order."

"...something more profound than objective structural problems to be methodically worked out. Demonic forces are passionate, active opponents of the truth, of the full truth of a social situation." "

Good religion refuses to despair in the face of sociological demonry. It goes on the attack... Forgiveness, not everlasting guilt, is the final defeat of evil."

PART TWO: CHRISTIANITY IN A TRANSPARENCY MODE OF EXPRESSION

goes deeply into the Biblical and theological basis of Christianity, concludes with this expression of Universality:

> Because the message of Christianity is culturally contentless, Christianity can speak to every culture without destroying that culture....Western culture may pass away, but the Christian message will not...

Part Three: The Communal Emphasis in Good Christianity

explores this problem:

> ..being a Christian is a deeply solitary leap of faith....being a Christian also means being communal in a profound and organic way.

Solitude, Intimacy and Christian Life—Together

covers

1. The Communal Character of Authentic Solitude
2. The Mystery of Intimacy
3. Overcoming our Dread of Social Formation

5/6. Focus/Qualities of a Vanguard Christian Circle
7. Fuzzy Features in the Fog of the Future:

> Fundamentally, how can all of us best be encouraged, in a practical way, by the knowledge that we are, as Christians, part of a great succession of human sainthood, of human authenticity which has lived and labored that our own living and laboring might be more wholesome.

Gene optimistically concludes that Vanguard Christian Circles will have the autonomy and spunk to be an ongoing prophetic critique of all bad religion of whatever heritage and of all bad ethics being practiced in their neighborhoods, communities, regions, and continents.

> I expect to see them share their visions of realism with the rich, the poor and the in-between, with insiders and outcasts, the powerful and the weak, scholars, educators, inventors, innovators, everyone and anyone....boredom and irrelevance and piousness and bigotry replaced with excitement and compassion and aliveness and humility ....prophetic spirituality crackling and sparkling in each and every neighborhood.

S.O.S.

by Gene Lehman

Back in school about 50 years ago I was very impressed by a cartoon in a social studies text. A farmer was in danger of drowning and called for help from a man on shore representing Government. Government plunged in and pulled the farmer under. Over the past 50 years this drama has been replayed countless characters crying out for Government to save them but almost inevitably end up either drowning or becoming hopelessly dependent on Government.

In spite of massive historical evidence of the pernicious way Government works, why do so many still look to Government for personal, social and economic salvation?

Those who keep trusting in Government solutions are much like an abused spouse who unrealistically hopes that things will get better. Government dependency is most seductive because there is always a long lineup of new players promising whatever they think will win votes. Of course, if Government ever did solve all problems, it would put itself out of business. But with a dreamy denial of real on all sides, politicians keep promising and reneging and people keep voting and complaining. And at the root level, problems inexorably go from bad to worse.

Small operators who are convinced they can't compete with corporations eagerly submit to subsidies, but subsidies give the most to the largest operators. Whether for small farms or businesses, subsidies reward inefficiency and present an almost irresistible temptation to fraud and abuse, the bigger the operation the greater the opportunity for abuse. When small operators surrender what little power they have to Government, they play into the hands of corporate take-over interests. Government is an exercise of power. Those with the most power and resources, the biggest businesses and institutions, easily influence Government to their advantage. Though there be far more small operators, even when they manage to get together, as soon as they try to work through Government, they fall victim to repressive regulations, increased taxes and inefficient operation. Although it may take longer, even the largest corporations ultimately suffer the same consequences of Government dependency.

Corporations are legally granted exclusive rights and privileges but with little personal responsibility. Corporations can go bankrupt, even be punished for monstrous crimes, while those at the top may not only go free but come out lavishly rewarded. Top Corporateers are rarely dependent on any one corporation, often serve on multiple boards of directors. With little sense of loyalty to any one business or any one country and little personal concern for those who work under them, whenever it is profitable, TC's can simply move to another country, get into another business, or just live royally off investment income and Government largess. perhaps as an ambassador or in some personally tailored position.

A common perception of Corporate Capitalism is of a system by which resources flow up to those with power and money while just enough to pacify the populace trickles down. Distinguished scholars may conjure up elaborate theories for economics, science or psychology but still try to explain complex relationships through a linear causality: This is caused by That. Linear Causality works in a perfectly controlled situation. But perfect control is an artificial illusion.

The illusion that it is necessary to control the economy either for narrow personal gain or universal social beneficence is shared by people with sharply conflicting perspectives. Those who are economically successful may attribute their prosperity to Free Enterprise. But Entry is not Free. Some start out with considerable resources (inherited or appropriated), others are blessed with good fortune, and a few are endowed with the innate talent and sturdy character needed to accumulate the Entry Fee.

What if instead of seeking Salvation from Government, Established Institutions or Caressmatic Gurus, we took S.O.S. to mean we have to Save-Our-Selves? Then could we gain strength and support not from powers that would enslave us but from Power that Frees us?

Reprinted from* LUNO (Learning Unlimited Network of Oregon), *editor Gene Lehman, 31960 SE Chin St, Boring OR 97009. Thanks, Gene! The April issue was a blockbuster!

Community meeting at the Berkshire Live-out summer, 1994, ayearly week-long get-togetherof families to plan strategies for taking back control over their lives.

Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk
Central School
Senior High School
Ravena, NY 12143

Dear Mary,

Thank you for the last issue of ΣΚΟΛΕ, which I enjoy and which refreshes me.

I send you today this article by a colleague and friend who teaches with me and at the university. In our society and schools which are increasingly multi-cultural, this article challenges us as educators to review the paradigms in which we present, albeit analyze, world events.

Best regards from your admirer,
John Froebel-Parker

WESTERN HYPOCRISY

by Mohammad Yadegari

The Western attitude towards Islam and Muslims has always been a shock to me. Yet it is not easy to break images or erase perceptions already engrained in people's minds. Thirty years ago, when I first came to the United States, I attributed the stereotyping of Muslims in this country to Americans' misunderstanding of other peoples' cultures. For years I struggled with American racial slurs, religious type-casting, overt and subtle forms of discrimination, and ethnic prejudice. However, deep inside, I always felt that, given the opportunity to learn, Westerners had the capacity to be reasonable, open-minded and judicious. Alas, I have come to see the error of my expectations. I find many Westerners not only ignorant, but also hypocritical, with a twisted sense of values. I wish I were wrong.

I teach history. In history, we see the past and the present as a river, an unbroken sequence of events with only gradual change. Yet looking at Western history, we must acknowledge the constancy of Western treatment of others, and of themselves. Witness the suffering of tens of millions of native Americans who—directly or indirectly—died at the hands of Europeans. Hundreds of thousands of blacks died on slave ships on their way to America, and their survivors and descendants were dehumanized across this land. Or consider Europe: since the twelfth century, millions of Jews have been expelled from their homes, their properties expropriated, their men, women, and children killed or forced to convert to Christianity. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims were massacred in Spain alongside the Jews in the name of "religious purity."

In the West, its past crimes against humanity are explained away as due to "ignorance in the Middle Ages," or "religious fanaticism in the Reformation." And we see the West labeling Hitler an "aberration." Yet even as time marches on, Bosnia-Herzogevina stands naked and bleeding before the conscience of humankind; the West does virtually nothing to stop the murders and expulsions—the bloodshed is put down as only an extension of "old animosities."

So even today, hypocrisy and the double standard are ubiquitous. Every morning as I drink my coffee, I am subjected to grotesque cartoons, ignorant editors, and self-righteous columnists who jolt me into the real world as they spew forth their self-righteous condemnations of Muslim extremists" and "Islamic terrorists." I muse on why David Koresh was only called a "cult leader" and not a "Christian preacher." I wonder why the Irish Republican Army members are not referred to as "militant Catholics." I am puzzled why the anti-abortion movement, a mostly Christian organization, is allowed to call itself "pro-life"; don't some of its followers bomb clinics, kill doctors, and terrorize people? I notice that American serial murderers' religious and ethnic affiliations are never identified unless by race. Yet when two Afghanis were involved in a family dispute some three years ago, the local headlines read, "Two Muslim Afghans...". I am bewildered by these inconsistencies.

For example, what would a Presbyterian think if his morning coffee had to be taken with sensationalist press about his "rapist" co-religionists? How would a Christian Scientist react if she saw a cartoon about her faith in which the Bible was drawn with the caption: "Rape, murder, robbery, theft, cannibalism; these are the fundamentals of faith." I have seen such cartoons about the Koran. I read the front-page headlines about "Muslim Terrorists" who blew up the World Trade Center in New York and wonder what happened to "innocent before proven guilty"? If memory serves, when the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem was set afire by an Australian Christian, the headlines read, "Deranged Individual...".

Government policy, too, is appalling. With Carter' s departure ended American human rights ideals in foreign policy, and even superficial standards of fair play. I shiver at the apathy of the present President toward the slaughter and mayhem visited on the innocent people of Bosnia. I cannot fathom how a man who earlier lamented the misery in what used to be one of the most egalitarian regions of Europe, turn virtually mute upon becoming President. I wonder how he can consume his dinner knowing that twenty-five percent of women and girls have been raped systematically in Bosnia. For the life of me, being a father, I cannot believe that another father and family man could be so indifferent. I do not hear the righteous indignation of good Christians. However, I do remember the outcry of the West when five Armenians were massacred in Azerbaijan some four years ago. The "barbaric" Muslims were blamed by the government and the media, day in, day out. There is no outcry now that Armenians are shelling civilian targets in Azerbaijan.

I listen to Western leaders who praise democracy, yet are silent when a military junta takes over Algeria, preventing the Islamic Liberation Front, in winning the national elections, from taking office. I remember our leaders' justifying the coup d'état by saying Islam cannot provide answers to the economic ills of that country. If their assumption were really true, then why not let the Islamic party get elected and fail?

Am I being too sensitive? Am I being neurotic? Am I missing something? I truly wonder.

Note: Since the time of John F-P's letter above, Mohammad Yadegari has sent me another fine article, which I am pleased to include!

READING BY THE POOL

by Mohammad Yadegari

Teaching is an art that we learn as we grow in our professional lives. It is something more than the teaching of specific subject matter. Teaching is the art of coaching the whole person by setting an example and providing guidance.

Teaching is multi-dimensional. We can teach subject matter as well as build habits in a student. I have been a teacher of mathematics for twenty-four years; and have found that encouraging good habits in students is as worthwhile as teaching them mathematics. I have had some success in influencing students to develop good study habits and even to become avid readers. I believe these will lead students to discovery on their own.

We don't have to be experts in child rearing to recognize the problems facing education in this country. Anyone can give us a lengthy list, which may include such factors as television, drugs, peer pressure, lack of parental involvement, discipline, violence and so on. There is no doubt that the nation is beginning to grasp, with increasing clarity, that our educational system is in decline and in need of repair. Generally speaking, our children have become couch potatoes—at best, mediocre, and at worst, dopes. Only a few have been lucky enough to rise above mediocrity to challenge their own abilities. What separates the achievers from the passive? The habit of steady reading builds good study habits and a treasure of knowledge. So I have been urging my students to read.

Even meticulous parents, who monitor their children's regular school work, may not recognize that learning should never come to a halt—even for a short time. That is one thing that I have always emphasized to my own children, before summer vacation arrives. When my daughter was ten, I encouraged her reading biographies of famous people during her summer vacation. Historical novels followed. I introduced her at age eleven to John Steinbeck by giving her *The Pearl*. Next was *East of Eden*.

For persuasion she could appreciate, I emphasized that reading a book a week or even every two weeks would be enough to put her ahead in her school work. My argument was simple: Most other students do not read in the summer at all. Therefore, even reading one book would put a child ahead of those whose brains have been inactive all summer.

"The better you can read, the less your workload will be in school next year," I reminded her, the best incentive I could offer.

The following year my daughter found school work much easier, and she could spend much more time developing social skills in extra-curricular activities.

My advice was not only for my own child. I do all I can to encourage my students to understand these two essential elements of the learning process: developing good study habits and reading. So I encourage them to read in the summer.

Some students listen and some do not. "Read," I remind them. "Read in the mornings. Read a book a week. If you want to succeed in life, read, and read good books." The closer we get to May and June, the more persistent I get: "No brain should hibernate in the summer." My students laugh when I say, "How do you expect me to teach an empty head, a mind that was put on hold, a brain that was left in a jar like a pickle?"

They object loudly: "Summer is for fun," they cry in chorus.

"Summer is for fun, indeed," I reply. "Summer is for fun and lying in the sun. Go swimming, get your murmur in amusement.

"Dana sleeps till one in the afternoon."

"Okay, let Dana sleep. You should wake up by eight or eight-thirty. You don't have to call Dana. Don't even tell him that you woke up at eight. Don't bother to tell Dana or Toni or any one else for that matter that you were reading. And by the way, Dana, if you happen to get up earlier than one, stay in your room for a while after breakfast and read. You don't have to tell anyone that you were reading too. We don't want to be called nerds, do we?" I join in their laughter. They know that I realize that they do not wish to be labeled "geeks."

I get serious. "From eight in the morning until eleven or twelve, which is the time your sleepy-headed friends will call you up asking you to go to the pool or the mall, is at least three full free hours. If it takes you two minutes to read a page, you should read some ninety pages. An average book is three to four hundred pages long. At that rate, you should be able to read about two books a week. In ten weeks that amounts to twenty books."

I see their open mouths and nodding heads. Grasping the opportunity, I press on.

"Do this through the summer." Some of them are edging forward in their seats. "Do it every year and you'll be far ahead in reading, English, social studies, and even math. After all you have to be able to read and comprehend before you do any mathematics."

I do not know what my success rate is exactly, but I do know that I have touched more than a few of my students positively. They tell me that I have taught them to learn and have a good time at the same time. Those who do listen tell me, later as adults, that my advice was sound.

Indeed, it is our duty as teachers, educators, and parents to remind our children - in any way we can— that time is precious and that they must use it efficiently in order to improve themselves. The process of learning should not stop at the end of the school year. In fact, we should teach our children to read from an early age. Reading should never stop. A child with a capable mind can succeed, can withstand pressure, will be able to resist panic in dire circumstances, and ultimately will make us proud and happy. Success cannot be measured in short-term goals. Dividends of this kind come slowly over a long period of time.

Assume a child can read one book a week. Many children, because of the keenness of their minds and their favorable circumstances, can read more. But assuming a child even reads only one book per week, that amounts to fifty-two books each year. From the age of eight until the age of twenty-two is a span of fifteen years. Fifteen times fifty-two amounts to seven hundred and eighty books. Therefore, a child can easily read approximately seven hundred to twelve hundred books, or an average of about one thousand books in their school years.

Imagine what would happen if each child in America read a thousand books in his or her youth— only one thousand books! From each book each child is likely to retain at least one new idea and learn at least one new word. One thousand new ideas and one thousand new words can create a new person, and all children gaining new creativity could create a new country.

Some people may doubt that a child can read a thousand books. They say, "There is no time." They say, "A child should have fun." I do not deny that people of all ages should have fun. A day with no leisure time or fun is a depleted day. But there is plenty of time if we delegate it properly.

Children who read regularly begin to diversify. Their choices in reading may include the light and the serious, fiction and non-fiction, science and art, current affairs, religion and history, and philosophy. As their knowledge accumulates, they are exposed to and become interested in many other worthwhile activities suggested by their reading.

Our children are our investment in the future. We, who love our children, who care for their future, must make our investment grow and prosper. We must give our children the intellectual diversity and ability to succeed. We must make them read.

Mohammad Yadegari, Ph.D., is a teacher of mathematics at Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk High School and is an adjunct professor of Islamic Studies at Union College in Schenectady and the University at Albany. He has written extensively on Islam and the history of the Middle East.

Married and father of two children, Mohammad Yadegari has been living in the USA for over thirty years.

We are grateful to John Froebel-Parker, who has been a contributor to ΣΚΟΛΕ in the past, for his offering of this significant commentary by Professor Yadegari on one egregious, yet seldom-acknowledged, cultural bias on the part of Americans as well as for his compassionately knowledgeable article on children and learning.

Professor Yadegari's two articles particularly please me because they illustrate so perfectly my perennial theme, which is that ideology kills life; heart-centered feelings enhance it! If that statement strikes some readers of ΣΚΟΛΕ as paradoxical, incomprehensible or plain wrong-headed, I believe the answer lies in the head-centeredness of our cultural institutions. John Gatto

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is struggling in every way he knows to say this to us . So is Thomas Moore (see the interview with him in the second issue of the Journal of Family Life). *Mohammad Yadegari is heart-centered. That is why, when he says, "We must teach every child to read," he doesn't mean what the superintendent of your public school means when he speaks to you in his annual PTA address! Boy, I hope you understand this distinction! It's truly important for us all!*

PRAYER FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

Lord, enlighten employers to respond promptly to applications, to advertise all jobs for the purpose of hiring and not for some other purpose, to treat all applicants fairly regardless of race, sex or age, and to treat all applicants respectfully with full knowledge that in this insecure world those representing the employer might someday themselves be seeking employment.

Lord, enlighten career couselors to cease relying on teaching the unemployed to pretty up their resumés, dress, and interview techniques in favor of organizing their clients and themselves as a lobby for job creation. Lord, enlighten career counselors that the unemployed need expanding employment opportunities, not a course in salesmanship.

Lord, enlighten policy makers and politicians to empathize with the unemployed to understand that a root cause of family instability and the many social ills is a lack of money to pay bills and have a decent life. Lord, enlighten those men and women of power to feel shame rather than comfort or pride when favoring layoffs of workers as a cure for budget deficits; to feel shame when promising tax cuts and not better employment

opportunities; to educate voters and themselves that the health of public finances and the health of the people whom they serve are best achieved through the appropriate mix of government and private sector jobs.

Lord, enlighten the very rich and major investors to understand the folly of short term thinking and greed which are sapping our economy and ability to compete in the world market. Enlighten them that increasing profits by reducing labor costs through layoffs is not only inhumane but discourages or reduces the shrinking number of persons who can buy the products which keep workers working.

Lord, enlighten the unemployed to vote no matter how despondent they feel. Enlighten the unemployed to use the ballot as a weapon against those politicians who are either unwilling or incapable of understanding their plight. Let the unemployed voters convey to politicians the importance of full employment in our land, especially now that the cold war has ended and the monies for war are now available for peace.

—Irving F. Franke

The author is a former sociology professor living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Reprinted from In Context,*No. 30.*

DEPARTMENTS:

I'm thinking about creating a special department and calling it simply RENA. *Finding her is like coming across a national treasure somebody carelessly left out in a field exposed to the weather—only, fortunately, this treasure is evidently age- and weather-proof! Or maybe it—she —ages like fine wine. Her account of a much earlier NCACS doesn't quite have the keen flavor of this one. Yay, Rena, let's hear it for single moms like you!*

THE 1994 NCACS CONFERENCE, JEFFERSON NATIONAL FOREST

by Rena Fielding

Dear Mary,

I know I told you I would write something about the conference this year, and I actually did write a lot or this two or three days after we got home, but the thrilling world of work loomed large.

I am the mommy, the daddy, the breadwinner, the housekeeper, the whole enchilada, and I'm not getting any more energetic or systematic in my old age.

I am now typing this on fumes, having worked last night and knowing I have to work tonight. I don't know who is still fooled by my seeming ability to do all this stuff, other than me. I'm sorry it took me so long to do this. It has been on my mind much of the last two months. In that time, I have seen my oldest child graduate from Marlboro College with highest honors, pulled my fifth-grader out of public school, and watched my baby turn into a regular kid before my eyes.

I'm studying for the CCRN certification exam myself and getting the fifth-grader ready to spend her summer in New Jersey with her dad (actually, getting me ready to spend my summer without her is the big job). I don't sleep enough, I have lots of gray hair, and I'm looking forward more than I can say to having all my kids learning at home from now on.

Whether or not you can use anything that I have written, I still needed to write it. It is the same idea that I have had since my oldest child was tiny—that it doesn't really matter what you do with your children as long as you do it. I see that I haven't even put any finesse to speak of on this old idea. It's a raw, from-the-heart idea that has stood the test of almost 25 years and I stick by it with firm conviction.

I am so proud and pleased when I look at my children, and I have heard enough praise for whatever I did to make them turn out like they did to die happy (well, maybe when I'm 90, because I still have pretty many things I want to do before I check out), and I have no false modesty about it any more. I'm an intelligent person and my children are intelligent people. That's the raw material.

For whatever reason (grace, I think), I have never wanted to do anything except be with them ever since I have had them, and that's the magic ingredient. I figured out real fast that they were seeing me for who I am, no veneer, and that they loved me for who I am, warts and all, just like I loved them.

I don't *know* if you can put that on the list of qualifications for an effective teacher, holistic or otherwise, that you need to be crazy about the children you spend your time with, but in our case, that's the salient point.

I have been head-over-heels in love with all these little girls for all these years, and rather than losing myself on the altar of martyred motherhood, I have accomplished some things for myself on my own that I am rightfully proud of, maybe it is just magic. I don't know why I'm so lucky. Grace.

* * * *

If I don't take a nap now, however. I may kill someone in my sleep when I go to work later on.

Jessie asks that I send you her best regards, and I do, but I hope she writes to you, too.

The Conference:

The more you know, the more you grow. Growing can be embarrassing to you when you like to think that you the same for her. We left Upattinas in 1991, after more than 12 years of being truly at home there, to move to Virginia. Except for Sandy Hurst and two students we have known since they were young children, my daughter knew no one at this conference. My 5-year-old knew absolutely no one. Still, it felt to my children like it felt to me to be in the conference mode—safe, happy, like you are where you belong. Among friends you haven't met yet is how Jessie put it.

There we were three days later, dazed and aching because it can't be like that all the time. Among the things that Jessie knows from the heart is the fundamental truth that WHO WE ARE is what is wonderful about us, not what we know or wear or Just who we are. Since everybody IS, that made everybody wonderful. No one had to prove anything or impress anybody. Just being who we are was enough, and being aware of that is everything. It makes life so easy to be aware of that, because all you have to do is live.

My 5-year-old, Anna, knows that perfectly well not by having realized it but by the grace of still being so little. Every beloved young child knows that. They may or may not know that they know nothing, own nothing, control nothing, and can do nothing because they are so little; however, they are certainly aware that they are the delight of our lives, for no reason other than that they are there.

As we get bigger and older and get out into the civilized, socialized world, we are so easily disabused of that certainty; and we enter into the anxious business of acquiring reasons for others to like us and let us be—stuff, attitudes, looks, savvy, all those kinds of reasons that justify our taking up space in the world. We unlearn the validity we came with to learn all this new stuff.

So in a way, at the conference we were all in a big day care where we could all be 2 or 3 or 4, having nothing but a body and a mind for each other and theday, and that was enough. I have been to enough of these conferences to see that it happens like this instantly and every time, and I really don't understand it, but that's okay. I don't have to understand everything.

Whether or not it was anyone's plan, there was certainly a theme to this year's conference, and it was everywhere I looked. I do not care much for new age jargon, but I cannot think of another way to characterize the idea except for "is-ness" and "now-ness." There was a fair amount of talk about holistic education (what is it, how do you do it), and one piece of that talk that I really enjoyed hearing was the workshop led by the Nifty Noisy Nat Needle. He slogged through all the words like "role" and "professional" and "facilitator" to get at the heart of the matter of holistic education, which seems to me to be this: when we show each other our honest faces, we teach well and we learn well. It is a mark of respect and trust to simply BE with our students, and that makes an environment for learning. No amount of seminars, degrees, certifications, or any other evidence that we are fulfilling our "roles" as "professionally" as possible can make us good teachers if the willingness to be who we are with our students is lacking. It means that we adults have to be continually committed to uncovering who we really are. There is a naked bravery in that. "What if they don't like me?" is the risk. What if you have shown them everything you are, and they don't like you? You have held nothing back, kept nothingin reserve to protect you from the hurt of "what if they don't like me?" That is the big lie that keeps us from being effective with each other, the idea that we have to keep so much in reserve to be "professional."

It takes respect and trust to give another the sight of who we are, and out of that respect and trust comes learning. That means it isn't so important that we know everything in order to teach. Playing piano faultlessly is a fine thing, but it will not make a person a good piano teacher. Excellent recordings of faultless piano playing are easy to come by, Sharing a passionate love of music is more to the point of teaching and learning.

The fear of presenting a less-than-perfect face to our students is in the way of effective teaching, just as it is in the way of every other vital exchange of life. The fear that others may find us lacking, uncool, unprofessional, misinformed, or otherwise open to criticism keeps us busy putting up walls of protection between us and those we would teach.

If we can't teach until we are beyond reproach, we can't teach. Our respect for our students keeps us working to master our topics better (we learn) and our students are keenly aware of the process and the reason for it, whether or not we are aware of it ourselves.

For many of the years I have been a parent and have spent working with children, I had denied being a teacher. I said that I just spent all my time with my children. Well, what else is there? It would be hard to find a less able parent than I was twenty-three years ago, but I now must honestly say that my ability was not such a big deal.

What I did really right in those green early years was spend all my time with my children. They didn't mind all the mistakes I made any more than I minded all the mistakes that they made. I understand that not everyone is content to spend all their time with their children, and I count it as a grace and a gift that I was so content with mine, because it made our time the most wonderful teaching and learning time.

Some of my children are all grown up now and neither they nor I have forgotten this. It was never the material and it certainly was never how great a mother or teacher I was. It was the process. Back then, all I had was time. My little girls then didn't care what I did; they cared that I did it with them.

I still have little girls underfoot, and lots of things have changed. I am way older, some smarter, some wearier. I now have a job outside our family, so we have less time together. However, the time we have when I come home from work is still 100% our time. They still don't care what I do; they just care that I do it with them. I may have missed a lot of the fine points of holistic education, but I don't think I have missed the major point.

Rena Fielding
7-7-94

HUMOR:

When I was growing up. one of our favorite funny books was one entitled 1066 and All That, a Memorable History of England, *which contained "all the parts you can remember including one hundred and three good things, five bad things, five bad kings, and two genuine dates." It had a companion volume entitled,* And Now All This, *a compendium of "all you need to know about everything," Both were intended as ironic commentaries on the idiotic practice of cramming for exams so prevalent in English public schools (and elsewhere!). I do hope my English subscribers remember these books, and that they —oh, heck, I'll settle for one of you! —thought they were funny. too.*

Anyhow, a saying that kept repeating from time to time in the latter, at any point when a schoolboy might begin to panic or overload on technical information, was "touch the relief map here."

Looking back I realize how much I was influenced by the humor I came across in books and magazines—as my kids have been by Mad Magazine and Firesign Theatre, and, more recently, Monty Python. I really need to have a regular humor column in this journal, and I don't know why I haven't until now, except that I was still trying to be a "proper editor of a proper journal," like the JAMA or the JAHP. Ah, well, better late than never. From now on, we have a humor department. I learned early on that you always turn to the back of a magazine for the jokes—so this is where it goes, OK? I just knew you'd want to know.

Oh—this series is from the After Dark program on my Mac. Feel free to touch (or steal) any item that tickles your fancy!

God made the Idiot for practice and then He made the School Board. —Mark Twain

Having children is hereditary: if your parents didn't have any, then you probably won't either.

A truly wise man never plays leapfrog with a unicorn.

First Law of Socio-Genetics: Celibacy is not hereditary.

Frisbeetarianism: The belief that when you die your soul goes up on the roof and gets stuck.

There has been an alarming increase in the number of things you know nothing about.

Duct tape is like the Force. It has a light side and a dark side, and it holds the universe together.

Paul's Law: You can't fall off the floor

Tell you what I'd really like! Send me a few of your own favorites!

NCACS IN THE PAST: REPORT FROM THE NATIONAL OFFICE 1986

by Jerry Mintz, Executive Director

I am writing this report at Albany's Free School. It is the first leg on a trip in which I will be visiting schools all across the country. There is so much to report since the last newsletter I hardly know where to start.

1. The national office in Glenmoore now has an Apple 2E computer, with 2 disk drives, printer, and modem. We also have a good Sharpe copier, and an RCA camcorder which we will use to record our trip. These were all bought with grants given to the NCACS for that purpose.

2. We have received a few new grants since the last newsletter, including $1000 from the 14th Street School Foundation to help us organize the national alternative school alumni association. Eric Wessing, a home school graduate of Clonlara, and board member Dorothy Werner's son, will help us get it going, and he can use a lot of help (see his letter elsewhere in this newsletter).

Dr. David Pall, founder of Pall Corporation of New York has made two additional contributions to the NCACS totaling more than $5500 (see story in this newsletter).

3. A questionnaire has just been sent out to all member schools of the NCACS. The information returned will be used in the creation of a new directory which will be ready in a few months. It will be the first new one in three years. If you have not received a questionnaire, write or call, or send us information about your school anyway. If you have received it, fill it out and

send it back right away. Don't miss your chance to bein the only national alternative school directory.

And if you know of other schools that should be listed, please let us know about them. We want this to be a really comprehensive directory. There will be special sections for home school information, and for innovative educational and fund-raising ideas.

4. This summer I traveled to the mid-west and visited the Country School in Ohio, and Antioch University, which joined the NCACS. Incidentally, they have college scholarships for student activists. More on that in the next issue. Goddard College also joined the NCACS, and we are interested in other alternative colleges becoming active.

5. On the way back we stopped in Buffalo at Mark Maris studios, where Larry Yuhasz, whom I had met at the Action Linkage conference in Tucson, helped us make the first NCACS video. It is available on VHS, BETA, and 3/4 inch commercial. It is nine minutes long and has videotape and slides of schools all around the country and footage of the national convention at Upattinas in PA. We worked for two solid days on the project using Larry's very sophisticated equipment. The bill was nearly a thousand dollars, but in the end Larry said to consider it his donation to alternative education and the NCACS. THANKS, LARRY YUHASZ!

We are planning to make a longer professional video with some of the new video and slides we are taking, now that we have a better idea how to do it. Stay tuned!

6. We visited the Clonlara Jamboree in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in late August. It was a very interesting event. I showed the video for the first time and did a presentation on the NCACS. I am beginning to understand how home schoolers can successfully interact with each other. Furthermore, I cansee how home schoolers

the best of both worlds—benefits from home schooling and alternative schools, perhaps creating organizations that can help kids learn about group process. While there I attended a session on satellite schools, and I would be glad to help any home schooling group that wants to create one.

7. My first stop on this trip will be the retreat for the Midwestern NCACS members at Racine, WI, being organized by board member Tim Souers of Highland Community School in Milwaukee. It will be on Sept. 26-7, and we'll let you know how it went in the next issue. Tim plans to give an award to Pedro Abizu Campos High School... .

8. There is a company that any member school might want to check out. It is called the First Non-Profit Risk Pooling Trust. It is in Chicago, and the phone is 312 930-9500.

9. The Northeastern Regional Conference in Washington, D.C. from

If you want to borrow a copy of the video to show at a school gathering, or to put on cable TV, let us know what format you need and send $5 to the NCACS office

8. There has been much interest in the insurance problems of member schools. Board Members Olivia Loria and Lu Vorys have been doing a survey of the membership and will be issuing a report. Meanwhile we did some research in the office and did discover one

November 13-16 sponsored by Somerset School and organized by board member John Potter. It promises to be a block-buster. DON'T MISS IT. Not only will Northeastern schools be coming, but Southeast schools are also invited. You should be receiving a separate mailing. For more information call or write Somerset School or the NCACS office.

ΣΚΟΛΕ

the Journal of Alternative Education

Children's Issue

1983 CALENDAR
MADE BY THE
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Spring, 1995 Volume XII, No. 2

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ΣΚΟΛΕ

the Journal of Alternative Education

Editorial Staff
Ellen Becker
Larry Becker
Connie Frisbee Houde
Mary Leue
Betsy Mercogliano
Chris Mercogliano

Publisher
Down-to-Earth Books

Photographs
Connie Frisbee House
Betsy Mercogliano

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Cover picture: Cover of the Free School calendar for 1983, drawn by Kaleb Camacho, whose account of his student days appears starting on page 46.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Dear kids, both large and small,

This issue is one out of four that we publish every year, and it is the one set aside for you to use if and how you choose. I thought it might help if I gave you a little idea of how this journal got started and how I thought it might go from here on.

First: I have a strong belief about kids and adults that I hope shows through in this journal. I guess that belief is based on a lot of things I've been learning throughout my life. I'm seventy-five now, but looking back at when I was a kid, I realize that what I think about now, what I believe my life is about, what I do every day, is still based on what I thought, believed, did then!

I hope I've learned things since that time! If not, I've sure wasted a lot of good time for doing it before the Death Crone closes my eyes on this life! So being young in years doesn't mean you "know" as much as you'll ever "know" throughout your life. I have come to the conclusion that living is learning, and that goes on throughout one's whole life! But whatever you learn as you get older and older comes out of that earliest learning, and is colored by it. So the space we adults give you kids for laying down that foundation is, in my mind, the most important thing we can do! You are our future!

In those terms, a lot of people, especially in our country, seem to me to be learning some pretty wrong things, like using up our precious natural resources, polluting the air, the water, the whole earth with poisons, destroying the ozone layer—things like that, which seem to come about because a lot of people don't think their lives matter, seem to think it's OK *not* to feel responsible for what happens to our habitat, or that the people who are warning us about the damage are exaggerating—or some other belief that allows them to ignore the problems.

Well, I suspect that these habits of thinking about oneself—such as the idea that each of us is so insignificant in comparison with the billions of other human inhabitants of the earth to matter, sort of like the comparison between the number 1 and 1,000,000,000—may come about partly, at least, by having been treated that way for the first sixteen years of one's life!

If you look at the way many Native Americans think about themselves and about life, they don't play that numbers game. They think about the respect that one gives to all living beings, animal, vegetable or mineral, because each of them is alive, in its own way, just as we are alive in ours! Thus, rocks have a life which you can experience if you have the proper instruments to measure it! You can communicate with plants and receive a response that lets you know they are "hearing" you. I know, because I've done it! There is a computer program, developed by a guy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Artificial Intelligence Laboratory that allows you to watch it happen! If you want to know more about that, write and ask me and I'll send you the story.

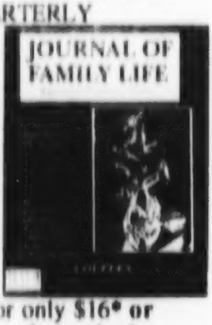
So for me, the whole thing of thinking about our own lives and the life of our earth is based on respect—and self-respect comes first! If you have that, everything else falls into place, and learning becomes easy and exciting, because there's no end to it! One thing just naturally flows into the next thing, and so on and on.

So, I hope that's what this journal is about—lifelong learning. This particular issue is filled with stuff, a lot of which was written by people who are not yet out in the world making their own living. Please give what they have written *your* respect, and write something back to go into the next kids' issue. I promise to give it my respect, and to print it. And I will print your letters if you ask me to, so that other kids can read about what you have to say. The next kids' issue won't come along for a while—since it is every fourth one—but by that time I would hope to have plenty to put in! Also pictures, poems, whatever.

Oh—you will notice that last half or so of the issue contains articles written by people over the age of sixteen! That's because I believe strongly that kids and adults need to be able to learn from each other! So I hope you read the whole issue. There's some good stuff there!

One more thought. I really don't know where we got the idea that kids can't "become adults" until they are at least twenty-one. We don't think kids are able to think clearly for and about themselves! It hasn't always been that way! Life was shorter in the old days, and people were considered adults by the age of thirteen or fourteen. Alexander the Great was only sixteen when he led his Greek army out to conquer the known world—and succeeded! In our community and a few other places, kids get to do apprenticeships with adults with occupations like veterinary medicine, midwifery, photography, gourmet cooking, lawyering, stage design—and they do community service like serving breakfast to homeless people, helping clean up our city neighborhood, taking care of chickens, milking goats—all sorts of things!

THE JOURNAL OF FAMILY LIFE
PUBLISHED QUARTERLY



The lessons of life begin at home, in our hearts and with those around us. The *Journal* spans generations and gender to address the needs and growth of families today, with all their complexities, relationships, beginnings and endings.

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We invite your involvement.

Please write to us at:
JOURNAL OF FAMILY LIFE, DOWN-TO-EARTH BOOKS,
72 Philip Street, Albany, New York 12202, or call 518/432-1578.

Our sister publication, the Journal of Family Life, received the following communication during January. ΣΚΟΛΕ's *role in the proposed transaction will be apparent from its content:*

THE KALEPAEDEIA HOUSE

January 20, 1995.

Spring '95 Editor
Journal of Family Life
Down-to-Earth Books
72 Philip St.
Albany, NY 12202

Dear Friend,

We are a group of homeschooled students who attend a supplemental program called The Kalepaedeia House. We are all very concerned about the earth and its creatures. ... We would appreciate it very much if our essays could be published in your journal so that others may read them and want to help nature too.

We think it is great that you are accepting manuscripts from all ages! We look forward to hearing from you. Good luck with your magazine!

Sincerely yours,
Lauren Cahoon, Darius Lind, Zachary Lind
Rebecca Furbush-Bayer, Isaac Furbush-Bayer,
Sara Schultz, May Brinn-Beers, Timmy Maragni,

And from their co-director:

January 28, 1995

Editor, Journal of Family Life
Down-to-Earth Books
72 Philip Street
Albany, NY 12202

Dear Friend:

The homeschooling community in Ithaca was happy to receive copies of your first issue back in the fall. We hope your endeavor is thriving and that each succeeding issue is better and better.

Our students are children of homeschooling families who have chosen to enroll them in our supplemental program three and sometimes four days a week for group activities and academics which it is often difficult to achieve at home. As you may see on our enclosed flyer, one of our interests is environmental studies, and as part of our on-going ecology class on local deciduous forests and the larger global concerns, the students have written argumentative essays on conservation issues.

The younger children in our program (ages 5-8) did individual animal studies and generated posters; the older ones researched their chosen concern and, through a process called multiple draft/peer review, they wrote these articles. They read their works-in-progress to the class at every stage, and at the end the entire school gathered together to hear the essays and present their reports on the posters.

In an effort to find a larger audience for these essays, we have been successful in having three of them published in a local newspaper. Now, of course, the other children would like to see theirs published.... So few publications accept student manuscripts!

We thank you very much for your journalistic efforts on behalf of the homeschooling community! We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,
Elisabeth Furbush, Co-director

215 Miller Road, Newfield, New York 14867 (607-564-3614)

My response (in part) was as follows:

February 5, 1995.

Dear Kalepaedeicians,

If you take the Greek stems involved, add a bit of a Latin twist, and put it all together, you get (I get) "beautiful (kale-) kids (paed-) whose profession (-cians, like pediatri-***cians***) is from or of the gods (dei-)." How does that sound? I like it because it fits! We've decided that we want to become kids again and join your school, it sounds so great! Wouldn't it be great if the whole world ran that way? And it could, you know! So easily!...

And if you're wondering why I am running on about something you all know and don't want to bother with but just want to get on with the job that has to be done—trying to get people to look at what is happening to the non-human inhabitants of our earth as well as our air, water and soil, our trees and our growing things in general—...well, I ...am teaching a course to our kids in the Free School, because they asked me to help them understand how come we got ourselves into this mess in the first place. So looking at those things comes easily to me. ....

And now the news you're waiting for. I've got a deal for you guys involving two options—so you get to choose. From the magazine we sent you, you already know we publish stuff written by kids, and take them seriously.... But (w)e are totally dedicated to surviving as a publication, and that means weighing in all sorts of considerations ... So your articles wouldn't appear until perhaps next winter.

The other option is to let me have them for *ΣΚΟΛΕ, the Journal of Alternative Education.* My spring issue is going to be filled with stuff by kids, or by adults who were kids back in the seventies and/or eighties in our crazy school, the Free School. ... My own kids from my class will be writing stuff, my grandchildren will write stuff, and I'd really like to publish your articles—all of them—but I would also want from each of you a short thing, say a page or less, on who you are ... what I really love are stories about the stuff kids carry around in their heads about life, about what their lives are like, what they love, what they hate, stuff like that. ...

The disadvantage of letting me have them for *ΣΚΟΛΕ* is that not as many people will read them (maybe four hundred and fifty or five hundred, perhaps as many as seven hundred by then, as opposed to three thousand)—but on the other hand, you could remember that I am willing to publish whatever you send me that I have room for, in one issue or another. One out of every four will be by kids from now on. Also, I'll sell some copies of the issue to kids in this area. I really want to get good stuff from kids, and I am in touch with a lot of alternative schools, so I can make these contacts, I think! Maybe I should call the once-a-year issue by kids something special so other kids will know. What do you think?

I'm going to send you a couple of issues of *ΣΚΟΛΕ* so you can decide better. ...

Love, Mary

P.S. They accepted—and here are the essays and the bios. I am floored by the depth of understanding, the eloquence and the level of caring all of these researchers have shown. Thanks, all of you!

The kids in my history class (from the Free School) think they're great, and have written their own essays, looking at a bit of how they figure we got into this mess in the first place, from the point of view of the history of "civilization." I've put them in after this batch!

SAVE THE ATMOSPHERE

by Timmy Maragni

The atmosphere has been in danger for about a century. Damaging gases have been released into the air. There is a hole in the ozone. And there is a lot more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere than one hundred years ago. If this crisis is not forestalled, the earth will become so hot that the poles will melt a little and the oceans will rise. I say that the atmosphere must be saved.

The atmosphere surrounds the earth and protects it from extreme temperature changes. People take this for granted because it's so far away. The ozone is a layer of special oxygen that protects the earth from the heat of the sun. But the ozone has been disturbed by man-made chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). CFCs destroy ozone molecules. Because of this, there is a hole in the ozone over Antarctica. There is a lot more carbon dioxide in the air than there was one hundred years ago. This is caused by the cutting and burning of tropical rainforests. Trees in these forests absorb carbon dioxide the same way that we breathe oxygen. Carbon dioxide is also produced by the burning of more wood, coal, gasoline and oil. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas. Greenhouse gases keep the earth from being too cold. Because all this carbon dioxide is in the air, the earth is starting to warm up. This warm-up is called the Greenhouse effect. If the earth warms up a little more, some ice will melt off the poles, and the oceans will rise. Cities like New York, Los Angeles, Tokyo, London and Boston will be submerged. This disaster must be stopped.

If you want to help stop this disaster, you could plant some trees to absorb carbon dioxide. You could also send money to an organization helping to plant trees, or save the rainforest. This will help reduce carbon dioxide. Don't buy aerosols. Aerosols contain CFCs. Don't do much unnecessary driving. Unnecessary driving is, for example, driving a half a mile to go to the store, or see a friend. Instead, you could ride a bicycle or take the bus. Not doing any unnecessary driving will help reduce carbon dioxide by cutting down on burning gasoline. If you don't have any land to plant trees on, you could help plant trees at a nature center or in a city park. If you can only spare two dollars to send to an organization and think it won't be worth it, remember that every cent helps. People don't usually want to stop something like driving to the store instead of walking, or riding a bus. However, everyone is going to have to start worrying about other problems than not driving everywhere. They will have to start thinking about the crisis the earth is in.

—Timmy Maragni, age 12, Newfield, N.Y.

My name is Timothy Maragni, but everyone calls me Timmy. I am twelve years old. I live in the woods about ten miles south of Ithaca. I like riding my bike and swimming in the summer, and to ski and skate in the winter. I also like playing soccer. I really dislike all the harm being done to the earth and its air and animals. I think your magazine sounds great. Please publish our essays.

DAMAGE

by Sara Schultz

Do you care about the animals? Thousands of them are dying because of oil spills around the world. Birds such as the puffin, guillemot and razorbill are nearly at risk from all of the water pollution. Let's explain to the people that we care about our animals and maybe they will help us help them.

First let me tell you how oil spills occur. Lots of tankers are having accidents and they spill tons and tons of oil. In 1987 3.5 million tons of oil were spilled in the oceans around the world. Do you know about the Exxon spill in Alaska? This was an immense super tanker which was accidentally steered into the rocks. It spilled 232,000 barrels of oil into the Prince William sound, which is a location chock full of rich wildlife. The second most common way the oil gets into the water is that when the crew on the tankers clean the oil rooms they spill a lot of the oil. Oil spills kill thousands of animals. Water with oil in it is calm. When birds land they get oily and sticky. The birds try to get the oil of' their feathers with their beaks and it gets in their mouths and they die in a few days. Therefore, don't you think we need to help?

If you would like to help save the animals, here are some suggestions you could try. You could clean a little bit of water where there has been an oil spill. Even if we clean just a little bit, every effort will help the dying and helpless creatures of the sea. While you are there you can draw pictures, make movies, and start forming a group to save the animals. You could ask people who are on the tankers to be much more careful. It is amazing that every oil tanker is not double-hulled. There would be many fewer oil spills. Also, ships that have sailors from some other countries might not be as great at maneuvering a ship as other sailors because they are not trained as well. If there is a good captain there are fewer chances of oil spilling. If we could accomplish this there would be many fewer oil spills and many fewer animals dying.

Any objections to my suggestions? You might not have a place near you where there has been an oil spill. Then you can donate some money to an organization where they will purchase tools to clean the ocean and buy black tunnels that they will place on top of the ocean to stop the oil from going on to the shore. Even if you donate a little bit every bit will help. If you would like to learn more about oil spills read stores and find videos about them.

How much more beautiful the sea would be if we humans would be a lot more careful and stop being so careless. Most all oil damage is caused by humans' carelessness. Oil spills are destroying coast lines, giving birds terrible diseases, and killing all the marine life. Therefore, if you do something to help the creatures of the sea, even if it is just a little bit, it will help those animals live longer and better lives.

—Sara Schultz, age 10, Ithaca, N.Y.

Hi, my name is Sara Schultz. I'm ten years old. I enjoy playing the saxophone, soccer and ice skating. I live in Ithaca. I think it is a great idea to have a magazine that kids contribute to. I have a dog named Buddy and a parakeet named Andrée. I'm very concerned about animals and I hope you publish our articles. Thank you.

SAVE THE RAINFOREST

by May Brinn-Beers

A long time ago there were very few people on earth, but now there are so many people that we are cutting down many many trees for lumber. Many of the trees that we cut down are from the rainforests. This destroys many animals' homes. And with no rainforests, not only the animals can't survive, but the people can't survive. I think we should all try to help save the rainforests because they are the most beautiful and wild ecosystem in the world. And they are very rare and they grow in very few places.

These rainforests mainly grow in the Guinea-Congo region of Africa and the Malay Archipelago. People travel all over the world just to collect plants and some kinds of foods from the rainforest. Many plants that grow in the rainforests are used for medicine. Without those plants we will have to lose many more lives than we already have. Also people are clearing out spaces to put their houses in and, as if that is not too much already, they are clearing out a wide space around their house for their yard. Furthermore, cutting down trees causes the climate to change, and all the moisture that was gathered by the trees will flow down the river which causes floods. Also, another very big problem is people are raising cattle to sell at markets for money and they burn the rainforest for cattle fields.

Many people chop down trees just for money. You can help save the rainforest by buying nuts and fruit that are from these forests. This way people obtain the money they need without having to cut down trees. Another way to save the rainforest is to buy a part of it from an organization who sells it. Then the organization will take good care of it. And if you need to buy wood, then make sure to buy it from people who grow fields of trees especially for lumber, and not from the rainforest. I'm sure you can think of some more ways to save the rainforest. But if you can't, try to do one of these.

But suppose you said "There are so many trees in the rainforest it would not hurt if I just cut down a few trees." Yes, that is true, if you just cut down a few trees, that would not hurt. But there are so many loggers in the world that 11 million acres are cut down each year, so we need as many people as we can get to stop cutting down trees. But if you then said "Fruits and nuts from the rainforest are very expensive and I can't afford to buy them." They are expensive but you could just buy "Rainforest Crunch" or rainforest crunch ice cream which is not as expensive as fruits and nuts. Or you could get together with a group and have each person contribute a little bit and buy a part of the rainforest. All ways to save the rainforest are important. If we don't get them done the trees will be gone—and we cannot survive without the trees.

The rainforest is the most beautiful and the wettest land in the world, so we all need to do our very best to save it and do at least one of the possibilities that I have mentioned to save the rainforest.

—May Brinn-Beers, age 10, Ithaca, N.Y.

My name is May Brinn-Beers. One of my favorite hobbies is hiking and camping. I love animals. I have a dog named Tiger and a cat named Willie. I am ten years old. My birthday is May 26. I love spring and summer.

I have two brothers and one sister. My brother is away for a year of service in Ecuador. I am hoping I can go visit him. Actually, I was born in Ecuador but I came to America when I was four and I forgot Spanish. I like to help the earth and I would very much appreciate it if you could publish my essay.

LEMURS IN PERIL

by Lauren Cahoon

What species has a long striped tail, teeth that never stop growing, and can run on its hind legs!? The answer is the lemur, an inquisitive creature that only exists on the Island of Madagascar. There used to be forty species, but many of their species are extinct and the ones that are living may be in the same serious danger. Their forests are being cleared away for farmland and they are going extinct. We should save the lemurs, for they are one of the most special of Mother Nature's creatures.

Many people don't know that the lemur is special. In fact, the lemurs used to live in peace in their lovely forests—that is, until humans came. Soon the lemurs' main enemy was man. No wonder! They turned beautiful forests into parking lots and malls. Many villagers slaughtered the harmless aye-aye for supposedly bringing bad luck. People even eat lemurs! Also, Madagascar is a poor country where the average human lives to only forty...So the government is more concerned about establishing schools and hospitals than saving lemurs. Another heart-breaking fact is that people are clearing the jungle for farmland. But the people who are poor need land and cannot find any but the rainforest. The soil is poor so the barren ground is left while man clears away the rest of the lemurs' paradise. The reason for this conflict is that both the lemurs and natives want the forest; sadly, the lemurs, who are the ones who truly need it, are losing.

In order to help the lemurs, you can educate the children by bringing in an experienced person to teach about them. When they know more about lemurs they will want to help them. Also, raising funds by perhaps selling cookies or getting groups to donate money to the lemurs will help the lemurs' rainforest from getting cut. Instead of cutting down the forests we could find products that need the jungle. For example, a small periwinkle flower that cures a certain kind of cancer was found in the Madagascar rainforest. If we find more products like this people will want to save the forest, rather than slice it.

It would be splendid if you could find a way to save the lemurs. But if your schools can't get an experienced person or informative books in the library, write a letter to your congressmen for an address that has to do with saving lemurs. If you think raising funds is too difficult, go to your nearest nature center and ask about some other fund raisers that you could participate in. If you find all the suggestions above too difficult for you, just try writing an essay or a letter to the Madagascar government. If you care for the lemurs please do one of these things.

Unfortunately, not many people are undertaking these projects. A very disturbing thing is that the existing laws to save lemurs are hard to enforce. Many villagers do not understand about the lemurs' need to survive. Also, many people think the only animals needing help are the California condor, the grizzly bear and the moose. I am not saying that these animals shouldn't be saved. But what people should realize is there are many other species needing help too, like the delta sprelt fish and the large-eared bat and of course, lemurs. The lemur is such a wonderful animal and we've been cutting down their forests for years. Isn't it about time we do them a favor?

—Lauren Cahoon, age 12, Dryden, N.Y.

I'm Lauren Cahoon, and I'm very tall for my age, which is twelve. I love animals, mountains, hot chocolate, popcorn, summer and spring. I enjoy reading, writing, drawing, hiking, camping, bicycling, singing, soccer and listening to the "Prairie Home Companion." I really hope our articles get in. I want to help the earth a lot. My dream is to be on the crew of the Sea-Shepherd, or to go to Madagascar and/or South America. I think your magazine sounds great and I'm really glad you wrote us back.

SAVE THE WHALES

by Isaac Furbush-Bayer

Whales are the largest animals on earth and occupy all the seas on it. They are very intelligent animals. But most whales are endangered, like the Blue and the Humpback. There was a law passed in 1986 banning the hunting and killing of whales, but people still do. An estimated 11,000 whales have been killed since then. This is a terrible slaughter and must be discontinued. People need to maintain working together very diligently to help keep hunters and pollution out of the water.

Whales are not safe despite the laws protecting them. They are still hunted in the name of scientific research. But whalers don't study them; they kill them and sell them for money. Whales are also hunted by poachers. Fishermen deplete their food. The Yellow Fin tuna fishermen have killed six million dolphins since the 1960's. Also other fishermen's nets kill 3,000 harbor porpoises each year. Greenpeace has inflatable boats that they drive in between the harpoon and the whales, but this does little when they're not there. Pollution is another problem. Noise can also interfere with the echolocation that whales use. In the 1860's steamships and an explosive harpoon gun were invented. This made it easier to hunt whales, which depletes them even further. All these problems make it a grim prospect for the whales.

There are many ways to help the whales. Some of them are to educate children. You could take them to an aquarium or bring in an experienced person to talk about whales and show a movie or slides. Another way to help is to write letters to the President urging him to help, or, take a group of people on a whale watching ship or donate money to either Greenpeace, National Wildlife Federation, or the Whale Adoption Program. There are many other ways to help. We should do them all very earnestly.

If you are not a teacher or do not have a nature center near you, then you could go to a library and get a book about whales or rent a movie. Even if you don't have a lot of money just a little bit would help. Educate yourself so you are not immune to factory ships or harpoons that explode inside the whale. Even just buying tuna fish caught in nets that don't hurt dolphins would help. If this is not done then the whales may become extinct.

Many countries have banned whale killing, but the slaughter goes on. You must help the whales now—don't wait. Just imagine, the most beautiful animals on earth are being killed like pigs. Possibly a whale has just been killed right now. Just think—the largest animal in the world! Let's not let extinction happen...remember, it means forever.

—Isaac Furbush-Bayer, age 14, Newfield, New York

Hi, my name is Isaac. I live in the country in a log house. I am concerned about the wild life and our earth. It makes me mad when I hear about whales being killed, or any other animal.

In my spare time I practice hockey on my pond, for I am on a hockey team. I also take piano lessons from my dad. I have a pinball machine that is about 20 years old from a shop in town. I fiddle with electronics a lot and play with my radio.

In the summer I like to swim in a pond down the road. I like being in a supplementary school because it teaches me subjects that are important.

HELP SAVE THE EUROPEAN WOLF

by Rebecca Furbush-Bayer

The European Wolf is a dangerous animal. These wolves usually hunt in packs and often kill and eat prey ten times more immense than themselves. Unfortunately, these wolves are in danger of extinction because they are being trapped and hunted. If we don't attempt to do something about it, then that will be another fantastic animal that we didn't succeed in saving. People should stop hunting them and start helping them.

But ever since people have had farm animals, the farmers have needed to protect them from wolves. Therefore, many wolves have been killed when trying to capture farm animals. One of the problems is that a dog and a wolf will mate occasionally, and so in the towns people can't tell the difference between dogs and wolves, and so the "dogs" will wander freely through the streets. Another problem is that people don't like these wolves. For instance, if a wolf is looking in their garbage, people don't like this because they don't like the idea of a wolf snooping around at night. The last wolf in Scotland died in 1743. The wolves in Ireland survived until 1770. Some people in European countries see no reason for not killing them for the sport of it, and will pay a great deal to do so. In other words, these wolves are very endangered and are in need of diligent help.

The reason these wolves are having such a hard time and need much assistance is that they have a bad reputation in storybooks and fairy tales, like the big bad wolf in "The Three Little Pigs". To save these wolves we must think of something to convince people to help. One idea you could use would be to cut and paste pictures of these wolves and make a magazine, newsletter or an elaborate exhibit about them to encourage people that they should be saved. Another thing that could be done would be to go to a nature center and get the people there to bring out a wolf and show everyone how beautiful and intelligent these animals are. Or take them to the zoo to show them wolves. This is a very big problem and all people need to be convinced that the wolves should live. When you are trying to convince people, ... you can say "Get out a movie or some books about them." Or ...you could say that they should perhaps copy information about the wolves and give it out to friends. Also ... say, "They are a very important part of the food chain and should be saved." As you can see, there is no winning argument against saving these wolves. It is true that European wolves are dangerous carnivores and are very hard to protect. Most people agree that it should be done. But unfortunately shepherds and people with livestock don't always follow these rules. But even though not all people do, we must try our best to do what we can. Thus, the fate of these wolves is in our hands. We have the choice whether to let them just slip away, or to try to save them.

—Rebecca Furbush-Bayer, age 11
Newfield, N.Y.

My name is Rebecca Furbush-Bayer. I am 11 years old and I live in the country in Newfield. My friends and I are interested in endangered species, the atmosphere and the earth. I really like animals. I also love to read books. I like to be taught at home with some other kids and not have a big group. I take piano and violin lessons. I like music because it's fun.

SAVE THE WHOOPING CRANE

by Darius Lind

The Whooping Crane, standing nearly five feet tall, with its blood-red head and snow-white body, is one of the most graceful and beautiful members of the stork family. Sadly enough, it is severely endangered. The Whooping Crane's summer range used to extend all the way down to Illinois; now its range only reaches as far south as mid-Canada. Over-hunting and loss of habitat have made the Whooping Crane's numbers go down. Luckily, their population is increasing due to the help of concerned people. I think the Whooping Crane has every right—as much as we do—to live a full and natural life.

The difficulties that have made life hard for the Whooping Crane are the loss of swamps, bogs, and marshes in which they raise their young. Another reason for their decline in population was that hunters were killing them for sport, because they have a brilliant white body that makes an easy target. Another reason for the plummet of the Whooping Crane's population is that the Crane only hatches one out of the two eggs it lays. All three of these problems made the population drop down to twenty individuals.

To bring the population back up to normal, two different ideas have been used so far. The first approach was to take one of the two eggs the Whooping Crane lays and place the egg into a Sandhill Crane's nest. The Sandhill Crane would then hatch and raise the egg. Another idea people tried was to take one of the eggs and raise the chick themselves with a hand puppet that looked like an adult Whooping Crane. This made it possible for humans to raise and release the chicks. These two ideas were a great success. Since 1940 their population has slowly and happily increased from fifteen or twenty to two hundred individuals.

To help the Whooping Crane's numbers increase even more, people could better educate the children of the next generation about the environment and various different animals such as the Whooping Crane. This may teach them to have more respect for nature. Doing this might change the way people treat the animals like the Whooping Crane that live in ecosystems near them. People could also help the Whooping Crane by giving money to the organizations who help them. But people may be hesitant to give money to the Whooping Crane. For instance, people might say "If the Whooping Crane becomes severely endangered, or extinct, it would not have an immediate effect on us." But in the long run a slow chain reaction would increase or decrease the population of animals and plants, which would have an effect on us. These are reasons not to let the Whooping Crane perish. Thanks to all the help that the Whooping Crane has received, this wonderful stock may not perish. But the loss of their habitat still looms like a dark cloud in the distance. If the Whooping Crane becomes extinct it will be a terrible loss of one of Mother Nature's most beautiful and graceful birds.

—Darius Lind, Age 12
Brooktondale, New York

I am Darius Lind. I live ten miles outside of Ithaca, New York. I am 12 years old. I have a twin brother and two little sisters. My family also has two dogs and one cat; all in all my family has had 5 dogs, so far. I enjoy playing soccer, board games and computer games as well as hanging out with my family and friends. I think the idea of this magazine is interesting.

SAVING THIS SPECIAL HAWAIIAN BIRD

by Zachary Lind

An endangered wildfowl that looks somewhat like a Canadian goose lands on the volcanic island. This is a Nene goose (pronounced nay-nay). Scientists say Nene geese may be relatives of the Canadian geese. They say the Nenes most likely got off track and stayed in Hawaii. The Nene geese were almost put to extinction in 1949 because of loss of habitat and over-hunting. But they were saved by a group in England. Like all beings in this world the Nenes have a right to live, so we should preserve them as if they are our own family.

In 1949 there were fewer than thirty Nene geese in the world. The reasons they were nearing extinction was that Hawaiians killed them, then European settlers came to Hawaii and brought livestock. Then livestock destroyed the Nenes' habitat. What also made the Nenes' numbers go down was that people introduced mongooses to kill rats, but they also hunted Nenes and helped decrease the numbers of Nenes. The Nenes were living well for a long time but Europeans came and sent them flying toward extinction.

The Nene geese were saved by the Wildfowl Trust (WT) in Slimbridge, England. This is how they were saved: The people at WT started a breeding program (and it was successful). In twenty years there were one thousand Nenes in captivity. Two hundred lived in the wild. Now there are about 750 in the wild. You could help the Nenes by supporting breeding programs. In 1957 the Nenes became the Hawaiian state bird and this made people think more about Nenes. Another way of helping Nenes would be to tell people what happened to the Nenes and how it happened. People could study and learn about Nenes in their natural habitat and find out more about what might help the Nenes. If everyone tries to help the Nenes come back it will be good, and it will restore the Hawaiian ecosystem. That would be great.

If you are not able to support a breeding program for Nenes, then you could write a letter to someone to help the Nenes. If you can't easily get an address for a Nene breeding program. then write to the nearest nature center, or, if you're very desperate write to your congress-person to get an address for a Nene breeding program. Then you could try to help the Nenes in some way, shape or form.

As you can hopefully see, the Nenes badly needed help and they got help from people who cared for the Nenes and really wanted them on the planet, but the Nenes still need protection. Since this strong-legged bird was successfully brought back from being close to extinction, the other animals will not die out because of the Nenes' not being in the food chain. That's what might happen if the Nenes are not living in Hawaii any more. How would you feel if you were a Nene? You would want to be saved, right? Of course, right. So let's help the Nene geese.

—Zachary Lind, age 12
Brooktondale, N.Y.

ME

My name is Zachary Lind. I'm twelve years old and I live in Brooktondale, N.Y. I like to read, ski and play soccer. I have a twin brother and two sisters. Right now my family is building a new house. A couple of times we have had to wait nearly forty-five minutes for them. Our dogs are named Stella and Jesse. We will hopefully move into our house soon.

* * *

And here are the essays our Free School kids wrote to extend the story about environmental damage back into history, exploring how it could have come about.

MACHINES AND WHAT THEY DO TO THE ENVIRONMENT

by Ted Becker

I think that the worst use of machines was when machines were used to make store-bought items. They made too much and there was a lot of garbage and they started to burn the trash, pollute the earth and that was just the beginning, because the manufacturers could make so much so easily. The owners of these factories got lazy and rich and were used to high life style. This happened to many people and the rich got richer and the poor got poorer.

> August 1, 1970, Canada banned production of all detergents containing more than 20 percent phosphates; exempt from the ban were detergents used in car-washing establishments, manufacturing processes. In the U.S., seeing the same problem, the Department of the Interior released in September 1970 a report on phosphate content in 48 detergents, saying that phosphate percentages were as high as 73.9 percent. [Microsoft Encarta 1994]

Listening to that makes you wonder. Did the manufacturers really care or did they just want to put the chemicals in the machine and sell it? Is that all they want to do?

In New York State many people are trying to make pollution plants. When pollution plants are made, they have a reason to raise taxes for them to take our garbage to a plant and burn it and this is what it put into New York's air. Combustion produces carbon dioxide, water, as well as oxides of sulfur and nitrogen and other gaseous and nongaseous produces. Other products are fly ash and unburned solid residue. Emissions of fly ash and other particles are often controlled by wet scrubbers, electrostatic precipitators, and bag filters.

Now that we have to reduce so much and so many people are so

Ted

wealthy they won't get used to a lower life style and that's what gonna have to happen if we're going to reduce and not pollute.

> Early peoples had no need of engineering works to supply their water. Hunters and nomads camped near natural sources of fresh water, and populations were so sparse that pollution of the water supply was not a serious problem. After community life developed and villages became urban centers, the problem of supplying water became important for inhabitants of a city, as well as for irrigation of the farms surrounding the city. [Microsoft Encarta 1994]

The cities needed so much because of a bigger more demanding population so they made machines run by mostly coal oil or electricity. They made too much. They made cars. They pollute. They made tin foil and plastic-wrapped juice boxes. The reason they made so much is because they can just sit back and watch the machine do it.

> Many [pollutants] come from directly identifiable sources; sulfur dioxide, for example, comes from electric power plants burning coal or oil. Others are formed through the action of sunlight on previously emitted reactive materials (called precursors). For example, ozone, a dangerous pollutant in smog, is produced by the interaction of hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides under the influence of sunlight. Ozone has also caused serious crop damage. [Microsoft Encarta 1994]

The electric power plants create the electricity that comes in sockets in your house and burns most likely your garbage and puts chemicals like mercury, nitrogen, oxides of sulfuric acid and lead in the atmosphere. Those chemicals cause cancer and poison people. Is it worth it just for electricity? Without it we would have oil lamps, burn candles, have wood-burning water heaters or a fireplace—no toaster ovens and no microwaves—and a lot less pollution.

POLLUTION OF THE AIR

by Eve Minehan

It all started around two hundred and fifty years ago with the birth of the industrial age in 18th century England. Factories began to take over the fields where crops once grew. People came to the factories to get a job and they needed a place to stay so cities began to form .

To power the factories the British began to burn coal and the air that once been white turned gray and murky from the increasing number of smokestacks. This was back in 1306, but now it has gotten a lot worse. We have incinerators and big machines that are the cause of laziness and not thinking about the earth and the children that are left with it.

I am an apprentice with a midwife and whenever I see a new baby that has just come into the world sometimes the thought pops into my head that this baby is going to have to live in a polluted world unless we do something about it fast.

My biggest fear is when I get older and choose to have kids that my kids won't be able to go outside and play in the sun with out gobbing on a bunch of 250 sunscreen because all this pollution is eating the ozone layer away.

That's just a fear but we are definitely working our way up there.

WHALES—THEIR TRAGIC TIMES IN HISTORY

by Lilian Mercogliano

Whales are the largest mammals ever to live on Earth and are a highly endangered species. One of the big reasons that whales are so endangered is because of industrial whaling. Industrial whaling goes back to the Basques, who were the first industrial whalers to explore the coasts of North America. Following the trails of the cod fishermen who reported a plenitude of whales in Newfoundland, the Basques found their way there and found untapped schools of whales. It may have been as early as 1400, but there are very few records about industrial whaling until around 1540. One thing that made it easier for industrial whalers to kill more whales was the invention around the turn of the twentieth century of the harpoon gun which explodes inside the whale and the factory ships which could carry many whales. All the processing could be done on these ships instead of having to drag the whales back to shore.

One of the main reasons for industrial whaling was the oil found in the blubber, which was used to light lamps. Different parts of the whale were used for different things such as corsets, soap, paint, oil for machines, wool and leather. Many industrial whalers wasted the whale meat by getting the products they needed and not preserving the meat properly. If the meat from the number of whales killed by Europe each year during the height of industrial whaling was properly preserved—around 30,000 whales in a year from the Antarctic—it could have fed all the people.

Industrial whaling was unlike the whaling done by native people such as the Eskimos, Caribbeans and Indonesians. Their whole purpose of killing the whale was to use everything, including the meat, for their survival. They would only kill about 20 whales a year to feed their tribes. They used the gut for waterproof clothing and windows, the oil for heating, cooking and lighting, they ate the meat and the organs, they used the baleen for thread, whaling gear, fishing equipment, combs, toys, traps and amulets; the bones were used for fences, sled runners and house construction. Any scraps were fed to the dogs or used for bait. They have been doing this for between 800 to 4000 years—they had no written records, only oral history. They had much respect for the whales. They blessed the whale and the spirit of the whale was honored so as not to offend other whales and to assure future success.

The reason industrial whaling stopped was more because the industrial whaling countries thought that they were not getting enough whales and some countries like Japan and Russia were getting more than their share, than the fact that whales were going extinct. In the 1930's, when it became clear that there were very few Right whales left, the industrial whaling nations put a ban on killing them. The humpback and the Right whales had the hardest time because they swim closer to shore and are slower than other whales. So they were the first to start going extinct. Humpback whales are now as rare as the Right whales were because it took another 30 years before industrial whalers cared enough to stop.

In 1929, the Norwegians drafted the first whaling legislation.

Gaby

Eve, Lily and Elisha

This draft outlawed the killing of Right whales, females and calves of all kinds of whales, and Blue whales less than 60 feet long. Even though this draft was signed by eight countries, it was not ratified by England until 1934 and was boycotted by Japan, the Soviet Union and Germany. This was the beginning of World War 2. Those three countries needed the oil from the blubber of the whales for their machines and tanks. It took until 1946 at the International Whaling Convention in Washington for guidelines to be drawn-up whose point was to save whales as a product to sell in years to come. They were not acting in a way to save the whales from extinction but more to make sure that there were more whales to kill and sell later. But an agreement was not signed until 1949. The signatures on the 1949 agreement were Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, South Africa, Sweden, Great Britain, The United States and the Soviet Union. Japan did not join until the next year. In 1982, a law was made, banning whaling. But an estimated 11,000 whales have been killed since then. There are countries now that are killing whales, like Norway. Russia and Japan are still killing whales for "research" which I think is their way of trying to work around the ban.

There are also organizations that help protect and preserve the whales like Greenpeace and the Whale Adoption Project. There are also ways you can help like donating money to these organizations or only buying tuna with the "Dolphin Safe" seal on it to help prevent the thousands of dolphins that die each year in tuna nets. You can also help by cutting the plastic rings from your soda six-packs because they can get stuck around a dolphin's nose, or in a whale's throat or in their baleen and stop them from being able to eat, so they will starve to death. By recycling instead of throwing everything away, which sometimes is dumped in the ocean, you can help prevent the pollution of the whales' home or breeding spots.

I think it is strange the way many countries had banned killing the female whales but they could still kill the males because if all the males die, the females will not be able to reproduce and whales will all die off. I also think it is kind of disgusting the way our species could kill millions, or billions!, of the largest mammal on earth and probably the most graceful and beautiful mammal to live in the sea. People have to remember and educate others that whales are not fish but mammals like you or me that breathe fresh air, swim in family pods and sometimes a whale will live with its mother for its entire life. Just think what would happen if you lived with your mother for your life and your mother were suddenly killed by another mammal. The acts of history don't have to prevent present day acts of helping and saving this beautiful species.

OIL

by Elisha Mittleman

I want to tell you some of the history on oil and what led up to the oil spills that are happening now. Petroleum and crude oil were used thousands of years ago. The Chinese and Egyptians used it as a medicine. But I don't know what kind of medicines they used it for. Native Americans used it a lot also for medicines. When the white men came to America they stole the oil and sold it and said it was a medicine for many illnesses, but it was not a medicine; it might have even killed some people.

When people started to use oil lamps they used whale oil, but people discovered that petroleum was safer to use because whale hunting was sometimes dangerous. So they switched to petroleum.

Then two New York lawyers hired a railroad conductor to drill for oil. Then at a shallow depth of 69 1/2 feet he struck oil and started to pump eight barrels a day and soon twenty a day.

I think one of the reasons people use so much oil is because we are so spoiled. People think that oil will be around forever so we use it without thinking. People are only thinking about money for themselves without thinking about what it might do to the oceans, the air, the animals, the fish and almost every living thing if we're careless when transporting or drilling for oil.

In Europe people have to pay a lot more for gas and oil. They carpool and have small cars. Here in America we have big cars that use a lot of gas and oil. For example if ten people went to a party together almost every single one of them would go in their own car instead of car pooling.

Americans aren't careful with the fuel they use for heating their homes either.

I hope that when I have kids they can swim in clean and fresh water and not have the risk of being harmed by the oil that may be in the water. And for that not to happen we have to care about the earth more and be less spoiled.

RAINFORESTS

by Gabrielle Becker

Here is my idea of what caused the rainforests to be misused. This is my idea of how things go from harmony to destruction. At first, people cut only small amounts of the rainforest. Indigenous people used to burn small places in the woods to plant their food and grow their crops, and then after a few years they would move to a new place. So that way the hole that they had burned previously could heal itself and become normal again. And, unlike us, they never ran out of forest, because they only used enough to survive.

In European markets, for 300 years or more, pepper, aromatic woods and spices could be extracted from Southeast Asian forests without destroying the forest's balance. In Equatorial Africa's rainforest the process was similar. The only forest products exported before the late 19th century were small amounts of hard wood and timber for Europe's furniture makers and oil palm nuts harvested in the deltas of the Niger and Congo rivers. But things changed.

As the European population grew and there were more needs, people began to cut down more of the forests, especially Europeans. When Europe ran out of its own forests, it colonized America and used the Americas' forests to get wood for making boats for their huge navies. Europe also used red dye woods for Europe's clothing needs. Europe decimated extremely large areas of forests in the Americas for sugar plantations when it ran out of its own sugar supplies. Entire forests were being removed for sugar plantations. They did this for the first 300 years of the European colonization. First, the Portuguese took control of coastal Brazil around 1530, then cleared a long forest belt replacing it with sugar plantations. Sugar takes a lot of people and a lot of hard work to grow. So Portugal ruthlessly enslaved Africans to work on the sugar plantations. By the 16th century, the Dutch moved to the Caribbean islands and planted plantations there. Because the ecosystem is very fragile, they destroyed most all of the vegetation on these tropical islands during the 16th and 17th centuries. Gradually the English in Barbados cleared plains for cane fields and hills for fuel wood. France did exactly the same thing in Haiti, permanently destroying the island's vegetation. Spain also destroyed lands in Cuba in the 1700's.

In 1815, the world's rainforests were doing all right except for the Americas' tropical forests. Africa's and South Asia's rainforests were almost untouched until the late 1800s. But when Queen Victoria reigned, the British made money on industry and used it to cut down more rainforest on all the continents for commercial agriculture. Until the last year of the century, development did not hurt the rainforests on a big scale although it did change the temperate and subtropical forests (which surrounded and protected the rainforests). The change made it harder for the rainforests.

Around the same time, European property law was imposed on the independent Latin Americans and the colonized area of Africa and Asia taking away communal rights of the rainforests and grassland indigenous people.

People began to discover how to use machines that could cut lots of trees at the same time, which made it easier and took much less time. For example, inland rainforests like Southeast Asian and African were barely touched until powerful sawmilling machines were made in the late 1800s. Because of this people could cut down larger areas. I think that it's easier to destroy the beautiful rainforests because we aren't living with the destruction. This is still happening today. I also think Europe and America and Japan take much more than is needed to live. We use and throw away too much and take a lot for granted. We don't know where a lot of things we buy come from and so most of us don't care.

In the middle of the twentieth century, fast food hamburger shops came into business. Consumers liked them because they regarded beef as a sign of status and it was sold cheap at the hamburger shops. There became a big demand for beef. People started to burn large amounts of rainforests for fields in which to graze beef cattle for fast food shops. And businesses got bigger because people like to have convenience. Fast food shops are very profitable, although they are destroying the rainforest and not enough people seem to care that we are messing with nature's atmosphere. If there is no change, we will turn our forests to desert. We are using the rainforests for our own needs without thinking about the impact it makes on the earth's balance and its animals including ourselves. We are repeating our past today.

POLLUTION OF THE OCEANS
by Joe Mastantuono

As I sit I wonder what causes humans to destroy so much of our oceans. Humans want more; greed is the main emotion for behind oceanic destruction.

Before the Industrial Revolution, which occurred in the late 1800's, ocean pollution was not noticeable except in large seaports which dumped all their sewage in the ocean. In the 40's the domestic oil supply was getting low in America while in the Middle East oil was abundant because oil in the U.S. oil was being used for almost everything such as cars, power plants, and lubricants. In the Middle East people were still very nomadic in their lifestyles; therefore the general populace didn't need oil. So the U.S. tried to get oil from them, so they got started in the oil industry. But to ship all this oil they had to design new ships called tankers that could hold thousands of gallons of oil and ship them to America.

When tankers crash, thousands of gallons go into the ocean, killing all the fish and birds in the area. This is an oil slick. The latest oil slicks to happen were when an Exxon tanker crashed on the coast of Alaska, and when Saddam Hussein though it would be a good idea to dump the oil in Iraq in the ocean and burn it.

Sewage is another main reason the oceans of today are so polluted. Back in the old cities during medieval times you would take a pan and throw sewage out the windows, but things started to change. Toilets were being used but then the sewage was being sent to the oceans. In the 1800's people were already worrying about sewage, so an Idea was started that the sewage water could be. used to water farms but this idea was discounted untill the 1960's when sewage treatment plants were started. So now besides throwing sewage in the oceans they treat it and use it for farms.

Still a lot of work has to be done to save the oceans

Joe

THE HISTORY OF THE EUROPEAN WOLF

by Zachary Korzyk

One hundred years ago the European wolf lived all over Europe. Now they are an endangered species and they only live in Southern Europe. One of the reasons why wolves are dying is because people are cutting down the forests and getting into the wolves' space and the wolves are losing their homes and then the people are blaming the wolves for getting into people's space. And that leaves no space for wolves, so they die.

Another reason why wolves are dying is because they have a bad reputation. A reason why they have a bad reputation is because they make bad stories about wolves. For example:

"Three Little Pigs" or
"little Red Riding Hood" or
"Peter and the Wolf" or
The Boy Who Cried Wolf" —

all made-up stories to make people think that wolves are bad. So that's why wolves have a bad reputation.

And in places all over the world there was and still is a bounty on their heads and that's a real disaster because everybody wants to kill them for money and that's just another way of saying you get a reward for killing a wolf. And a lot of people kill wolves for sport because they are thinking wolves don't do anything for people, so what is the matter with killing them. But wolves eat rodents that eat corn and other vegetables that grow on a farm.

But I was thinking, what do people do for wolves? Nothing! So that is no reason to kill them. So if we want to save the European wolf, we should stop some of these things.

Zach

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Here follows a series of articles written by graduates of the Free School in Albany about their student days and what they have meant in their subsequent lives. I've also dug up snapshots of them as students in the school, and Connie Frisbee-Houde took pictures of them as they are now, except for my son Mark, whose pictures he and I supplied.

MY SCHOOL YEARS

by Mark Leue

My first memories of kindergarten at PS 16, the huge brick building across the street from my family's house on North Allen street in Albany are of "nap" time.

Our young woman (goes without saying) teacher, probably exhausted herself, would put on some suitably insipid music, roll out the mats as far as possible from each other, and spend the next fifteen minutes hovering over us. As she patrolled the room keeping a sharp lookout for potential "brush fires," I can remember trying to keep perfectly still, tense and almost rigid with the fear that she would find me less than completely immobile, trying even to control my breath so as to please her.

First grade was quite a shock to the tender young ones who passed muster in that first round of behavior shaping. Thirty desks in a rigid, rectangular, face to the blackboard arrangement, symbolized the no-nonsense sadism that our ruler, the currently politically appallingly named (although not without poetic resonance) Miss Dyke embodied. In her 70s, and well hardened by many years of battle with imps of our age, she dominated the classroom with an iron will and a quick hand that could quickly twist your ear while pulling you from your seat on the march to the principal's office for some real or imagined breach of the public dignity.

Halfway through the year we had a heavenly reprieve in the form of a beautiful young woman substitute teacher, Miss Riffleberger. Imagine our joy when we learned that her position had been made permanent due to the death of Miss Dyke.

Second and third grade kind of blend together, although in different schools. A move closer to my father's work at the State University necessitated a change to PS 27.

In the summer before my fourth grade began we moved to a village on the Thames River not far from Oxford, the famous English "City of Spires" where my father would be spending the year on his first (and only) sabbatical leave from the philosophy department at Albany State.

The village school, St. Bartholomew's, was probably a typical "comprehensive" (kindergarten through tenth grade)school of the time. The majority of the kids were expected to get to tenth grade, pass their "O" levels and join the English working class. We studied several subjects which I found novel and sometimes at odds with my previous background. Penmanship was perhaps the most exotic item of curriculum. My efforts with a real dip pen (no fountains pens allowed until mastery was proven) consisted mostly of trying to keep the blots to a minimum. Some of the children, however, had been studying Italics for several years and could write in the beautiful way that seems to have died out in this country early in the twentieth century. What I remember chiefly, however, about Eynsham was playing. Schoolyard recess, players' field (the town fields on the edge of town near the river) the locks on the Thames, the alleys and warrens that twisted their way between the ancient stone houses and pubs, but most of all a nearly magical walled-in couple of acres called "Temples Garden."

I suppose it must really have belonged to a man named Temple once, and there was some evidence that it had in the distant past been a formal garden. (I can remember that along one of its encircling eight-foot-high stone walls there were some old espaliered pear trees). [*Ed. note: Actually, I was told by the owner of the village "curiosity shop "that it was originally the site of a Roman temple.*] But it seemed a jungle paradise of vines, elderberries and small watercourses winding through ruined artifacts of many generations of settlement and cultivation. In such paradises fantasy games of many varieties and seemingly limitless duration were lived by small English kids in shorts or skirts.

As a "Yank" my vocabulary and accent were different but we had no problem speaking the universal language of imagination. Yes, I'm sure many of our games followed the same sort of unwritten rules of the games back in my neighborhood in Albany. War, Explorers, or even organized games like Tag, "Conkers", or

British Bull Dog were tried-and-true favorites—after all even "Doctor" has its rules and roles. But there was a feeling of timelessness (maybe influenced by the fact that it was still light in the summer till 10:00) that I haven't forgotten. The children had their own culture and the games seemed to have their roots in a past as old as the landscape we inhabited.

Mark, age nine

Somewhere during the year I began to become aware of and identify with the counter culture. The years were 1968 and 1969 and I don't know if it came as a subliminal message coded into the lyrics of my 16-year-old sister's Beatle records, or my fairly politically radical parents' views, but before our journey back over the Atlantic was complete I knew I wanted to stop having my hair cut.

After spending the summer driving around on the continent in a Volkswagen bug, we returned to the U.S. Never before or since have I experienced such a strange form of culture shock. Somehow my comfortable home and friendly neighbors had become transformed into suspicious bigots in an alien terrain. To make matters worse, several weeks before we returned, neighborhood kids had vandalized our house in a malicious and crude way. I was at an age of burgeoning self-realization and began to see how my family's "differentness" had always been there.

This self-awareness must have broadcast the kind of message that a bleeding animal will to certain species of shark. At school I was immediately dubbed with the nickname of "Girl." Between the

Mark singing with his kids (four years ago)
and working in his shop (recently)

general prison-guard-like tactics of my teachers and the bloodthirstiness of my classmates, by November I was done with the fifth grade. I was simply *not going to go* any more, period.

Thus began what later would be called "The Free School." It started with my mother's agreement to homeschool me. In truth, she took little convincing. I think she had been "champing at the bit" for some time and had had correspondence with, and a visit to, A.S. Neill and the "Summerhill" school in England the year before. I, however, had never heard of homeschooling, or "free schools" and the only private schools I had ever heard of were run by discipline-minded nuns. You can imagine my surprise and gratitude at being granted clemency from my sentence.

This lasted at least several days, until my first math lesson from my mother. After a few weeks of mutual head-butting, she began to look for other kids, to change the energy as much as anything else, I surmise.

In my mother's true style, within a few months we were a group of four and the initial round of politics had been settled with the state Board of Education. We were a "school," of sorts.

It was a good first year. I remember mostly the big events; going to Washington for the moratorium to end the Vietnam War, spending the first Earth Day picking up bag after bag of trash alongside a road; the "Be In" at the University.

We started the next year with about six teachers and twenty kids. I guess it was an outgrowth of my mother's involvement with the Civil Rights and Black Power movements that influenced her decision to have the school move to the inner city. That, and the fact that the rent was cheap on Albany's Franklin Street.

Much of the experience for me was about an uptown boy learning about downtown life. Lining up with the other neighborhood kids for a salty sour pickle given out free by the "pickle man", Mr. Richmond. Smashing out tunnels in the brick walls of abandoned tenements to explore them. Hearing the stories about the Green Street bordellos in their heyday.

I think it must have been the year that some of us did an investigation of the bigger river polluters, seeing what the Tobin meat packing company dumped into Patroon Creek. Photographing the open sewers complete with turds and toilet paper dumping directly into the Hudson at the end of Troy's streets. Visiting the sloop "Clearwater."

Sex, drugs, and rock and roll were also becoming major interests. I spent hours in a school closet with a 15-year-old girl kissing and doing diffuse petting. Hours jumping up and down on a mattress listening to "In a Gada Da Vida" by Iron Butterfly. To be truthful I don't remember getting high at school.

Group dynamics at the school ranged the whole gamut. We spent a lot of time working out our differences in "Council Meetings." I can remember some pretty violent incidents. A kid breaking a 2 by 4 over a teacher's back stands out in my mind. The most self-indulgent destructiveness came when either the teachers or the students or both decided to go "on strike" over some incident and the kids were allowed to completely trash the school. Bookcases were toppled, plates smashed and the shit generally hit the fan.

In retrospect, I think that part of the adults' willingness to let this happen may have been the knowledge that as part of the city's "Urban Renewal" program the whole block was being taken by eminent domain. Maybe this was the only way the adults could act out their anger towards the city's policy of what could be more aptly termed "Urban Removal." I don't think that this justifies it having been allowed to happen. Even then, I could stand back and say to myself, "Wow, so this is what a war is like." For the more destructive kids I wonder what the lesson really was. The school was out of the building within a few weeks and many of these kids were gone the next year.

Out of the ashes the school reformed itself and through hard work, good luck, and my mother's inheritance money acquired a rundown, ex-parochial school turned war veterans' post in the heart of the old Italian (now black) neighborhood not far from Franklin Street.

I had one more exciting, chaotic year at the school, and then a year back at the public junior high school. It was long enough to confirm that it wasn't where I wanted to be. By the end of the year a friend and I were putting up posters for kids interested in starting an alternative secondary school. How that came into being and where it went are another story.

So how has all this affected how I parent and educate my own children twenty-three years later?

Our kids are Homeschooled and predominantly decide how to spend their time. They are also given a lot of structure and some very firm limits. I guess we want them to have the best of both worlds. They shouldn't have to attend a school where they are wasting a large portion of their time. "School is fine as long as it doesn't interfere with your education," to quote someone whose name I don't remember.

I think kids thrive best when given clear boundaries. A basic rhythm and structure to their lives is also very important for them. I certainly would have benefited from more structure at certain times in my childhood.

One of the most important values I want my kids to gain is the ability to make choices based on what they believe in. It's often touted as a fact that kids are tremendous conformists and enforcers of dominant cultural values. I believe that to be a lie. If we don't repress them at home and at school and keep them drugged with TV, they are quite capable of deciding for themselves what is right and wrong. It is people who have this ability that our society needs more than anything else.

Mark, now thirty-five years old, his wife Helene and their two kids Ian and Madeline live in a house they built themselves in Ashfield, Massachusetts. They are a home-schooling family. Mark is a stringed instrument maker and restorer and a house builder, and Helene is a family child care provider, a former teacher in the Free School and a whiz with things financial.

Mark is also a Morris dancer, plays the guitar, and both he and Ian play the violin. Ian is also learning Morris dancing, and tells me he might go to England with Mark to dance later in the year!

LIFE DURING AND AFTER THE FREE SCHOOL

by Kaylana Mittleman

I don't exactly remember the beginning of my thirteen years at the Free School. That may have something to do with the fact that I was only seven months old. My mother is a teacher, and she brought me with her. So, the first few years don't really hold that big a place in my memory. The years following definitely do, though.

I remember a feeling of comfort, family and love. I learned to talk about my feelings, listen to others' feelings, and accept people for who they are. I learned to be open and honest with myself and everyone around me.

As far as schoolwork went, very little of the things we did were structured (in the "sitting at a desk and listening to the teacher for forty minutes" sense). Almost everything we studied was hands-on learning, whether it be all student-teacher interaction or going someplace to learn about something. My final year at school—I was in eighth grade—was a very relaxed year. I didn't do much schoolwork. I just kind of "hung out." When I think about it, maybe that was what I needed before the "big" transition. That transition was going from the Free School's forty students ranging from grades pre-K to eighth grade, to Albany High School's (AHS) 2400 students with only grades nine through twelve.

It would be a small understatement to say that I was scared to death to start AHS. But I did, and was utterly surprised to find that I was fine. In fact, I was better than fine. I made plenty of friends, did great in my classes, and even made honor roll for the whole year. Even though I had thought that the education I received at the Free School would not have prepared me for AHS's "real school" situation, I did great.

My first two and a half years at AHS were fine. But after a few months into my junior year, the structure and the total unfeeling of the students started to get to me. Everything was just so impersonal, and I started to hate it. I just up and left the second day of my senior year. And after a three month struggle with myself and my parents, I went back, and found the strength to endure it and graduate. I feel like I got that strength from being in the Free School. After graduating, I took a year off, to take a break from all the structure. I am now in college and doing all right.

I visit the Free School frequently. I feel like I am a whole person with a whole lot of inner strength because of my year at the Free School. I've got a large family and support network inside the Free School and the community. The people have helped me many times since I graduated from the Free School almost six years ago. I feel that I am very lucky to have attended the Free School. Everything I learned there will be very valuable throughout the course of my life, and I am very thankful.

Kaylana Mittleman, now nineteen, still lives in Albany, New York, and is a freshman in college in Schenectady. She enjoys reading, playing the piano, traveling and being

with her friends and with younger children. Lana has worked for two years with elderly residents at a retirement home in Albany.

Kaylana then and now, with Meighan

MEIGHAN'S FREE SCHOOL

by Meighan Carivan

I used to be so nervous about going to school that I had nauseous stomach aches every morning. The thought of school filled me with dread and I was always trying to avoid having to go. I did fairly well, but I had no real interest in learning. It was this negative outlook on education that The Free School changed for me.

I attended The Free School at two different times in my life. And although I was there for a considerable amount of time as a young child, it was the time that I spent there in junior high that had the most impact on me.

When I returned for junior high, for the first year and a half or so, I did a lot of academics. But as time went on and I got used to the general freeness of the environment, I began to do less and less. Since the teachers believe in trying to encourage students to do work instead of forcing them, when there came a point when I was resisting all the time, they decided to leave me alone to see what would happen. It was in doing this that taught me the value of education.

Despite the fact that I was not doing what many people would consider responsible, productive things, according to me, I was. I was completely satisfied doing whatever I suddenly had the desire for. And if I had an interest in something, no matter how strange or unimportant it seemed to my teachers, I was allowed to pursue it. Not only that, but I was supported in my efforts. I was never put down or called stupid or lazy and I never once had what I was doing belittled or discarded.

By finally being given the space that I needed, I was able to develop an interest in things and make a connection with taking the interests of my life and cultivating them into my education.

Today I am a full-time student studying music. at a local community college, as well as teaching part time at the school, It has taken me this long to realize what I could have been studying long before this year, but because I had to learn how to learn I am just coming to it now. I am beginning something completely new, and it is scary for me but I have been able to come to it because of what I have been taught about how to get what I want out of life. I have to be honest with myself about what I really want and not talk myself out of it because of fear. I need to always leave my options open and never limit myself. If I choose to view everything as available to me instead of letting my insecurities and inhibitions dictate what is possible, the world is mine. I believe that I owe this to The Free School for starting me on a path that has led me to where I am now.

My music is the love of my life and I can't imagine wanting to do anything else. Although it is hard to imagine my life any other way, I know that I might never have let myself follow my dreams if it weren't for taking that first step back in junior high.

Meighan is now nineteen years of age, and enrolled in music studies, including voice training with an excellent voice teacher, at Schenectady Community College. Her sister Libby, who was at the Free School at the same as Meighan, is a student at Hofstra University. Their younger brother Francis, also a Free School graduate, is at Albany High School.

"THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE ARE *FREE* "

by John Lester

First of all 1 would like to tell U a little about myself (John-boy). It was in 1973 and I was a young boy about nine years old at the time of my enrollment at **the Free school**. I am what some of U call *half bree, creo, redbone, high yellow, malloto* or whatever stereotypical name that some people may use to describe a person of two or more different ethnic backgrounds.

We (my family) and the school lived in a very diverse community, meaning that there was a lot of different cultures and types of backgrounds. A lot of people thought that we were kind of weird because we didn't do things in the traditional manner. But as we all know the traditional way hasn't been very successful.

It is now twenty-three years later and I am a young man that has been through it all.

The Free School way of teaching is looked on to be unorthodox but their methods work—trust me, I know; I experienced it!! At **the Free School** I learned everything from A-Z. There I learned so much in such a short period of time that if I wrote down

John then and now

everything I learned, there wouldn't been enough room for my fellow students and friends to tell their stories.

The Free School taught me the necessary tools to maintain a very healthy. happy and—most of all—a strong will to succeed in life. Don't get me wrong. My parents had a lot to do with it too. Two things that are most important in a young person's life are his family and his education.

The family is a major part of a young person's life because they are the ones that must encourage love, peace, togetherness, education, and also how to be independent.

The School's job is to mold all of the significant characteristics in a young person so they may carry out a happy and flourishing life. I feel when a young person is a high school graduate he or she should be able to maintain their own existence.

By this I mean having all of the necessary tools to get through life. If they need help they still will have their parents and teachers to fall back on for advice, and support, but don't let them hang around until they're twenty-five and unemployed. Let them get out there and learn about life because the only way to learn properly is to experience.

Without both the family and the School putting 200% of their effort into bringing our children of today up right, then our adults of tomorrow look pretty sad.

"Life is like riding a bike; put your child on it and give them a little push. When they fall, be right there to pick them up. Sooner or later they'll get the hang of it and U won't have to be there all the time."

The Free School put me on that bike and I learned how to ride.

This is why I call my writings "The Best Things In Life Are Free"—because **the Free School** is one of the best and most important things that ever happened in my life.

P.S. the proper way of spelling U is you.

John Lester is thirty-one years old and a father of two. He is currently working in the business management field, with the very creative local firm, Copy Inks. Also, on the side, John is doing free-lance typesetting and house framing, and wants to go back to college in order to pursue a career in teaching.

"AN EDUCATION FOR LIFE"

by Audry Camacho

I was five years old when I became a Free School student. Surprisingly, I remember those early years quite vividly and with mixed feelings. I looked forward to the daily exercises and especially enjoyed the morning meetings. It was at a morning meeting that I learned my loose teeth had large earnings potential. Students who lost a tooth would bring it to the meeting and the teachers would pay handsomely to have a look—as much as a dollar sometimes. My little brother Kaleb tried to sneak our cat's tooth in with his own one time. Unfortunately, the pointy eye tooth was suspected immediately and he wasn't able to collect on it.

My fondest memories are of the jungle gym, worm-digging expeditions in the back yard and the haunted house which was set up in the basement every Halloween. The annual talent show was the birthplace of my fleeting show biz career--for some reason my guitar rendition of "Jesus Loves Me" never again found an audience as enthusiastic as my Free School classmates and teachers.

While the Free School always put "fun" high on the list of priorities, they were never shy about teaching some difficult lessons. In my five-year existence on the planet, I had learned early on that offending classmates could easily be dealt with by "telling on them." The first time I ran to tattle on someone at the Free School, I was stunned to hear my teacher say, "Fight your own battles, Audry!"

Children naturally want to learn and the Free School gave us the freedom to learn at our own pace. Beyond academics, we were encouraged to share our talents and our feelings. The Free School gave me the tools to build a career, but more importantly to build relationships with people.

After the Free School, Audry received a Bachelor's Degree in English from Empire State College and a Master's Degree in Technical Communications from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. She became a stockbroker for two years and now she is a Senior Investment Editor with Newkirk Products, Inc., in Albany, New York.

Kaleb gymnast, Audry cartoonist

Brother Kaleb and sister Audry on the porch of their new house

"FAR OUT"

by Kaleb Camacho

Why do they call it the "Free School" if you have to pay money to go there? This is a question I remember asking my mother as a child. Little did I know that nothing in life was free, and that the word free had more than one meaning.

When I look back at the Free School with a little bit older, and hopefully wiser, outlook I can see that the Free School means something different for everyone. when I walk by the Free School I always envision a building infested with hippies and wall-to-wall flower children freeing their minds. Being a student of both public schools and the Free School I can honestly say they made learning easy and fun. I can't recall begging for homework in public school.

This school went further than vocabulary words and decimals. They took the time to hold each student mentally, physically and spiritually. One of the key motivators for strengthening students was the school's leader, Mary Leue. As a child I believed she had powers, but they did not include spells that could turn me into a frog. Instead Mary Leue was able to help me overcome my biggest fear at that time: her. I remember being forced to sit under a cafeteria table without food. I was not to be given food until I returned one of the many "ugly faces" that Mary Leue had given me. Faces so hideous, by the way, each one made me cry. Bored with crying and embarrassment I finally got mad enough to make an ugly face back. Mary Leue saw I was weak and took the time to make me strong.

The Free School definitely has a radical approach to teaching. They've added to my character, and over the years have helped build so many characters that they will probably write a book. I can describe the Free School in two words—

FAR OUT!!!

Kaleb attended the Free School from Pre-K to 4th grade. He is currently starting his junior year at the College of St. Rose where he majors in Graphic Design. At twenty-one, he is a home owner, having recently purchased a house in the Mansion Hill neighborhood in Albany, New York.

THE TURNING POINT IN MY LIFE

by Ethan Manning

After four years in public school I was about to give up on learning. I felt lost there. I felt I wasn't learning anything, that I couldn't learn anything. Every day I would come home angry and frustrated, feeling like I was stupid.

I started going to the Free School in grade five.

What words can you use to describe something so new, so different, it changes your life forever? The first thing I noticed at the Free School was that everyone wanted to be there. Everyone, the students and the teachers, were happy to be there. People listened to me. When someone talked to me it was with respect, I began to feel like I really was someone, that what I thought and felt mattered. And I started learning.

For the first time I wasn't told to "know stuff." For the first time school was fun, what we did was fun, learning new things was fun. Looking back on those years, I sometimes wonder who really was teaching who. When our teachers asked us questions I sometimes thought "I know that, I'll teach it to them." Sometimes you think of school as where you're pushed along by never-ending demands. Do this, learn that. At the Free School no one pushed. Instead it was like you were carried along on a wave of encouragement and enthusiasm. Along the way we learned to respect ourselves and each other, we learned to work together and on our own, how to speak up for ourselves and how to listen to others.

Next fall I am going to college. It is too soon to be more specific but my general direction is towards a career in the environment, forestry, or wildlife management. Somewhere inside me there always was a love of the outdoors. At the Free School this was somehow noticed, encouraged, developed and brought out in me. I became involved with the Seneca Indian reservation. From the people on the reservation I learned many things about the environment which I had never known. I also was introduced to Ward Stone, a well known environmental pathologist who helped me stay interested by letting me do volunteer work at the Department of Environmental Conservation. These people opened my eyes to things I'd only dreamed existed for other people.

At the Free School you feel you are among equals.

They know things you don't but they let you know that in time you'll learn. They talk to you like you're an equal but still let you be a kid and respect you for that. It's a wonderful feeling.

People are always going on about the love of learning. What I experienced at the Free School was learning to love. I have not been the same and I will never forget what they brought to my life.

Ethan is 18 years old and will graduate from high school in 3 months. He plans to go to Johnson College in Vermont for two years and then to either the University of Vermont or Syracuse University to major in forestry. He would like to be a forest ranger or an environmental conservation officer of some kind.

REGISTERED TRADEMARK
KARL KANI
5-23-68

And here is Ethan, essentially an extraordinarily tender-hearted, caring, kind and thoughtful—but shy—person whose compassion extends toward all creatures, animal or human! We are quite sure he will fulfill his present goals in some form or another!

Here follows a group of essays written (voluntarily, but at my request) by my little history of religions class of last year, ages nine through twelve. I include them as a kind of "curriculum aid": for others wanting to get a look inside a free school, taken from the students' point of view, wondering if all this self-choosing of study material really works. I hasten to add that teaching this particular subject was their idea, not initially mine. It worked to both our benefits!

Elisha Mittleman

In the History of Religion class what was important to me was that Jews were not the only people who had to hide their religion. The Christians had to also. In one of the stories the Christians had to practice in deep holes called catacombs because they might get killed if they were found. I guess it was important to me because I am Jewish and I thought Jews were the only people who had to do things like that because lots of people thought they were different. But I still don't think it's right that anyone should have to be treated that way.

I think it was important that we all learned about all of the religions not just one or two. Some of the religions I never even heard of before like some Indian religions. I had heard of the Catholic religion but I didn't know much about it. It was exciting learning about new religions and what people did to practice their faith.

I liked the Greek myths that said a lot about the gods and goddesses. It was neat to learn about the sky gods and goddesses, and the underground gods and goddesses. Some of the gods changed their names to some of the names of the planets, like Pluto, Neptune and Jupiter.

There was one myth that I really liked. It was about this one god who wanted a goddess to be his wife and he had to kill this really big dragon in order to get her. He had to bring back some blood of the dragon to prove that he killed it. But he was afraid that he would still not be given her hand even if he did the deed. He went for help to another goddess who said to take out the dragon's teeth and plant them in the ground. They would turn into warriors and he could fight for her. I liked that he went to a woman for help because usually men think that they don't need women for help.

I liked drawing while Mary read to us. Usually my drawing related to what we talked about in class that day or to the reading. It helped me to understand the story more to look at the picture and to remember what it was about. I liked to hear what other people thought about what we were talking about. It was nice to be able to ask any question we needed to when we thought of it. Mary is the best History teacher I ever had.

Eve Minehan

I liked History of Religion class because it's fun learning about other religions, even the religions I thought I knew about like Judaism and Christianity. What I really like are the Greek myths because they are usually about love, gods and goddesses, warriors, blood, temptation or death. My favorite myth is the one where the hero went to kill a monster and he promised his father that if he himself were killed the ship would come back with black sails and if he killed the monster then it would come back with white sails. But when he killed the monster he was so happy that he got drunk and forgot to change the sails from black to white. When his father saw the black sails he was so sad that he jumped off a cliff. This story makes me feel sad because he was so careless that somebody he loved ended up dying.

We also talked about Jesus Christ and how he was supposedly killed because people were scared. He was helping people but I believe that when Jesus was on the cross he did not really die. I believe that someone gave him something to knock him out and make him faint and then when he was in the cave the angels came down and opened the stone. They said it was time for him to go from the earth and let the people figure out what just happened. None of us know what really happened to this day.

In the class I liked the way everyone could just talk about things openly and everyone could express his or her opinions. The only trouble I had with the class was that sometimes it was long. However, Mary would let us bring up our notebooks and draw while she talked. I really like Mary as a teacher because she is very wise and knows a lot about everything. She has been all over the world and seen many of the places that she talks about in class like India and Greece and lots of other great places. Her experience helped me to understand more in the class.

Gabrielle Becker

In our class we learn about things we want to know about. I found out that there are a lot of things to learn about that I didn't even know existed before. We drew runes. I asked about my Uncle Andy. He has cancer. Mary talked to me about that. It got us talking about death and things like that. We talked and we talked about Jesus. There are a lot of different theories; did Jesus really die? I think he's still alive but maybe he doesn't look the same or maybe he's in a different country. I think that there are people who have lived so many lives that they're done and they want to come down and help us with our lives and that Jesus was one of those people. Maybe even Mary or Jun *san* [a Japanese Buddhist nun who has been building a peace pagoda nearby which our children have helped with] are one of those people because they help the world in their own way just like Jesus did. Sai Baba is definitely one of those people. He lives in India. I hope to meet somebody like that when I travel. Mary has gone lots of places. She tells us stories of what it was like in those places or the people she's met.

Sometimes we draw and listen to Greek stories from the big book that Ted brought in. I never knew there were so many gods and goddesses. We learn about important things, too, like hunger in Africa, peace or pollution. There are so many things that we learned about that I can never remember them all. Mary shows us things from her books. There is one story she told us that sticks in my head. Mary was in a small town called Delphi. She saw olive trees. There were olives on the ground and people were just stepping on them. Mary likes olives so she picked up the juiciest ones and took them home. She soaked them in salt water and olive oil and they were the best olives she had ever tasted.

One of my favorite topics was Egypt. They had a really neat way of writing and ways of doing things. I think they were really sophisticated. They had mummies and their ways of building the pyramids and the sphinxes were really unique.

I like learning directly from a person rather than out of a book. You get more of what it was like because Mary explains with gestures and her voice and expressions and not just with words. I liked the freedom of it. If one person was not interested in the topic for that day then he was free to go and do something else just for that one class. That way no one felt pressured and then we wanted to come back.

Joe Mastantuono

An interesting group of individuals enter my spirit domain (the library of the Free School) of learning every firstday (but sometimes Thursday). They come and discuss the history and religion of humankind. The elder, who was referred to as Mary Leue, taught the humanlings much about humankind's mistakes, such as the Salem witch trials. I was extremely touched when the elder mentioned the library of Alexandria (one of my Elders) and referred to the destruction in scorn. I am manifesting myself in one of the humanlings' written essays which might enter my domain.

I believed I knew much but I was proved wrong. I had no knowledge of ancient China and scientific explanations for Jesus' rise from the grave. I also enjoyed the lulling myths of the ancient Greeks' religion. i particularly enjoyed the stories of the elder's travels all over the old land.

The elder's wealth of knowledge on ancient religions was impressive. I had never heard of religion of the great mother, which was a matriarchal society in what is now England and France. The religion of Crete worshipped bulls and dolphins. The palace of the king of Crete, Knossos, had running water and skylights, and this was impressive to me.

I felt honored to know that the tribes of the Americas worshipped spirits like myself.

I extremely enjoyed knowing the elder, Mary Leue, who taught with an openness that was unheard of compared to other history classes.

Lilian Mercogliano

I like history of religion with Mary. She is a great teacher and teaches a great class. The reason I wanted to do history of religion class was because it sounded fun to learn about religions from all around the world. I wanted to know about other people's culture and about their gods and how they worship them. I really only knew about a couple of religions and I even learned some stuff about the Christian religion that I didn't know.

My favorite part in class is when we talk about the Greek religion and all the Greek gods and goddesses. I especially like when Mary reads from the big yellow book of Greek myths. My favorite god is Zeus and my favorite goddess is Athena. The reason I like Athena is because she is the goddess of war but she is also always very fair and wise, and knows which side is right and when she should help with that side. My favorite myth is the one about the underground labyrinth where there was a Minotaur who had to always be fed humans or he would destroy the whole castle which was built above the labyrinth. Once, when the King of the castle needed to find new people to feed to the Minotaur, he told one of his enemies if they didn't give him 6 women and 6 men, they would declare war on them. One of the young men named Theseus who lived in the city of the enemy said he would go and try to kill the Minotaur. Even though the father, who was the king of the enemies, didn't want him to go, he finally agreed to let Theseus go. When Theseus got there with all the other people who were to be fed to the Minotaur, one of the daughters of the King of the castle took pity on Theseus and gave him a ball of string. She told him that when he was led to the labyrinth to tie one end of the ball of string to the gate. Then she said to follow the snore of the Minotaur until he found the Minotaur. So, that night he did what she told him to do. When he found the Minotaur, he pulled out his knife which he had been carrying with him and he stabbed the Minotaur and killed him. The way he got home is a long other story.

It's so fun to hear the different stories about different gods and goddesses and people. I think the Greek religion is neat because there are so many gods and goddesses, not just one. What I think is neat about it is that you can worship different gods or goddesses for different things and you do not have to only worship a male god, but you can also worship a female goddess.

Another thing I like about class is when Mary tells us stories about the places she has been in the world. They are really neat stories and I like the way she tells them. I remember especially a story that Mary told that I liked a lot about England and the three different places of the life cycle. One was for fertility called the Avebury Circle where the single men and the single women would come down the hill and dance. Then they would spend the night together. The second place was called Silbury Hill which people believed stood for the womb of a pregnant woman with an eye on top. The third place Mary said was kind of like catacombs because they were underground and a place where people were buried. I thought those places sounded special and spiritual because Mary said that when she went into the circle of stones, which was the first place, she felt something strange happen inside of her and it stopped when she stepped out.

Sometimes we just talk about theories and reality like did Jesus really die on the cross, or is God real? Everyone has a different opinion. I think that Mary is neat because she has been around for seventy years so she can tell you what it was like when she was a kid and answer a lot of questions, too. It has been a lot of fun for me learning about religions that I have never even heard of or things I did not even know about some of the religions. I hope I can do the class again next year.

Ted Becker

I think that the history of religion is almost like a story of creation and there are lots of different theories. I think that everyone should learn history because it helps to form your own point of view of what you believe in and what you don't. I also learned that people that tried to bring peace, like Jesus, were used as signs of war. For example, in history class I learned that one night a man had a dream that if he brought a banner of the cross to a war he would win the war. I think that that wasn't good because Jesus stood for peace.

Personally, I think Greek history is the most entertaining because it always makes sense in the end of how things that happen now came to be. And you don't have to ask as many questions about it. And it's a lot like a big science fiction fantasy book. Greek religion also shows that good doesn't always win.

I believe that when you die you go up to heaven and a god or goddess tells you everything they know and then they make you forget everything except one thing that they told you. And I think that Jesus and all the other great people have died and came back so many times that they learned everything. And once you know everything, you have one chance to come back to earth and teach. And then, you go to heaven and you are one of the teachers.

History is very confusing because it takes a long while before you can understand and there are still some things that no one can understand. For instance, why there are so many wars that in some countries the average age to live was thirty! And the Christians had to pray underground because if they were found they would be killed because they were not allowed to pray to their own god.

In Greek religion there are many gods, unlike Judaism where there is only one. I believe that there are many gods. It seems that it would be very fun to be a Greek god because in one war all the gods started coming down and taking sides and switching sides. If I were a god I could live forever and do magical things. I would have lots of power over what happens on earth. If I could be any god I think I would be Zeus because he can change shape.

I really enjoyed being able to sit and talk for two hours about religion. I think my teacher is very good because she has gone to a lot of places. She learned about lots of religions and came back and told us about them. I liked being able to pick what we learned about and seeing the pictures from the history books. This was a very good class.

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And Ted wrote the following poem at Auschwitz, on an Interfaith pilgrimage made by the whole Becker family (parents Ellen and Larry with Ted and Gaby) plus another community member and myself, at the end of November, 1994.

THE SOUL OF THE HOLOCAUST

by Ted Becker

I am dead, but still alive.
I can speak, but you can't hear.
I can't be trapped, but I can die.
You can see me, but you can't touch me.
I am living inside of you. If you go, I go too.
If you can tell them, I can live.
If you don't I will die inside of you.
Please remember. Please tell them.

—Ted is now ten years old.

And here is a recent poem by Ted's sister Gabrielle:

BEAUTY HELD

Once I heard a crystal laugh
Saw a sleeping child.
Danced across a flowered field.
Gazed up at a beauty held sky.
Strolled in a flowing stream.
Fell face first in a mountain of
leaves. Lit the Hanukkah candles.
Believed in a magic man
with a big belly and a red
suit. Fell asleep, arms wrapped
around my feline and dreamt of
a beauty held sky.

—by Gabrielle Bennett Becker

The Blind Mouse ***is Ian's third book—a more ambitious undertaking than the first two. He is currently working on a book on time travel, which we hope to publish in future issues of ΣΚΟΛΕ!***

THE BLIND MOUSE

by Ian Leue

CHAPTER 1
CLEANING IT UP

The whole thing never would have happened if it wasn't for that blind mouse. You see, one day I was walking home from school with my best friend, Peter, when he said to me. "Hey George, why weren't you at the baseball game yesterday?"

"Groceries," I said. "Groceries, groceries, and more groceries."

Peter laughed, "You really do hate going grocery shopping, don't you."

"Are you out of your mind? No one could like grocery shopping."

"Are you kidding? It's one of the happiest times for me in the whole day."

"Why's that?" I said.

"Because you can find great things to gross out your little sister," he said.

"Really?" I said.

"Yup." he said.

Then we were at his house. "Want to come in and play a game of checkers?" he said.

'Nah," I said. "I have to go home and see if mom will let us go to the grocery store."

"All right," he chuckled.

When I got home my mom stared at me. Go down to your room and clean up." She ordered. (My room is in the basement.)

"But mo-"

"No buts, just go clean up your room".

I hate it when I have to clean up my room. That's probably because it's so messy. When I'm done I usually just hope no one's going to open the closet. (I put all my stuff in there.)

I went down to my room and started to clean it up. As I looked to my right, I spotted a little mouse. "Aaagh!" I screamed, for I was afraid of mice. I backed into the corner keeping an eye on the mouse. As I looked a little closer at him, I noticed he was wearing black glasses and carrying a small stick! This was a little frightening; I had never seen a blind mouse in my life! As I continued to back up I bumped into my closet door and was shocked to feel it starting to move inward!

This was scary because my closet door opens *outward* and not inward. I felt like I was nowhere, then suddenly I was in this little house and in front of me was an old man dressed all in blue. Dark blue, with a dark blue hat that had moons and stars all over it.

CHAPTER 2
WORKING IT OUT

"Greetings," said the old man.

'Hello," I said. "Who are you? Where are we?"

"I am a magician," said the magician, for that is what he was, "and we are in Magicland. I have been expecting you; what took you so long?"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I mean," explained the magician, "you have come here to help me resolve my dilemma."

"What's your dilemma?" I asked.

He bowed down low to whisper in my ear and then he told me. "Grossing out my little sister "

Oh", I giggled feeling a little surprised. "I'll do just that," I said, still giggling, "but how do I get back?"

"Not so quickly,' said the magician. "I didn't tell you how to do it, did I?"

"Oh, you didn't, did you,".

"No. I didn't, did I, " said the magician.

"Well, why don't you just do it and get it over with!"

Then he told me. "Sweets, sweets," he whispered, "Sweets will gross out my little sister and anyone else in Magicland."

Then I got back to the point I had started with at the beginning, "So how do I get back."

"Easy," said the magician. " Just step backwards," then he added, "in time.

I stepped backwards and was suddenly in my room. The blind mouse was nowhere to be seen and another surprising thing was that all the toys and everything else were on my shelves where they were supposed to be. This surprised me, but what surprised me more was when I leaned back on my closed door it didn't go anywhere. But when I opened it the way it usually went it opened right up and instead of Magicland being on the other side it was just my plain, old everyday closet.

I went back upstairs expecting my mom to ask me what had taken me so long, but she just looked at me and said, "George, you're not done with your room; no one could do it in such a time."

Then I realized what the magician meant about backwards in time; the time I had spent there wasn't any time in my time.

The next day, probably by luck, we went to the grocery store. I remembered that the magician had whispered how to gross out his little sister. By pleading I got my mom to get me a bunch of gumdrops. My sister looked a little weird when I got them, as if saying, "Why did you get those?"

When I got home I put the gumdrops in a safe place in my room, then I went to get Peter. I told him about all of it on the way home, everything from the blind mouse to the gumdrops. Peter and I went back into my room. I got the gumdrops and we both sat down with our backs to the closet door (facing the opposite wall) and pushed. At first nothing happened. Then suddenly the blind mouse appeared. Peter looked a little blank, obviously only half-believing the story. Then we leaned back again, the blind mouse still in sight. and the door started creaking inward. We were in the shop again.

"I'm glad to see you brought your friend," the magician said.

I introduced Peter to the magician and then gave the magician the gumdrops. "Good," he said only half looking at the gumdrops and making a disgusted face. He put them away on one of his shelves.

"Come over here," he said, nodding his head towards a door. He opened the door and led us in.

"What are you going to do," asked Peter.

"I'm going to teach you some magic," said the magician.

For a second I looked out with wonder at the room. At the walls there were bookshelves with books stacked on them and some piles of books on the floor. In the middle of the room was a circle of chairs. In the middle of the circle of chairs was a big round table. On the table were some more books. Around the chairs there was an assortment of: a magic wand, more books. some rolled up parchments, a big mug containing something that smelled, and a big black pot with a big spoon in it. Around the pile of stuff were more books. The magician led us to the book shelves on the left and picked up a book that said "Beginning magic" on the cover. He picked up another book that was exactly the same and handed one to each of us.

"Read," he said. Then he backed us up to the spot where we had come in and suddenly we were in my room again.

CHAPTER 3

BEGINNING MAGIC

Peter went home and I opened up my copy of the book. I couldn't find the author. but decided to read it anyway. When I opened it up I was surprised to see that all the first page were some pictures of towns. one of them being my town. I looked at the top left of the page, where the title usually is, and it said, "The Entrances and Exits of Magicland." Then I realized what it was. Why there was a picture of my town was, my closet was a way in and out of Magicland. I turned to the next page and there the title was: "How to Gross People Out (on earth)." This especially attracted my attention. I started reacting hastily. Let's see. There's "How to make pizza appear on your head"; no, that wouldn't do it. Ah, hah! This was the ticket. "How to make your hair turn into worms ."

Under the title was a chant. I said it and quick as a wink my hair was worms.

"This should gross her out". I said to myself.

I found my sister in her room

"Hi", I said.

"Ahhhhhhhh!!!!!" she replied. (Afterwards she said that I was the grossest human on earth.)

I decided not to keep my hair worms and turned them back into regular hair by saying another chant.

The next week we went grocery shopping again. I got my mom to get me lemon drops. I decided I would probably have to start buying the candy out of my own allowance. When I got back home I went to the closet and leaned back. Nothing happened. The blind mouse appeared. I leaned back again and I was in Magicland.

"So," said the magician, making another disgusting face. "I am glad to see you like to get a variety of candy." He led me into the room again. This time I noticed the corner of the room which I hadn't seen last time. I was shocked. It was the only place in the whole room that didn't have books in it!

CHAPTER 4
LESSONS

He brought me to the corner I happened to be looking at. 'This," he said, "Is where you will have your magic lessons."

"Neat," I said. "When will it start?"

"It starts now," the magician said. " I will teach you invisibility, one of the simplest things of magic."

We both sat down in the corner.

"Everything with magic is much easier if you've been in Magidand and luckily you have," he said. "It'll also make it much easier if you've had a little magician dust on you. You haven't yet, but it's very easy."

And with this he pulled off his hat and held it upside down so it looked like a blue ice cream cone. He put his fingers in, took out a pinch of green dust and sprinkled it on me.

I shivered, it felt as if someone was tickling me (I am very ticklish).

"As I said before." the magician said, "This will make magic much, much easier for you."

"Now the lesson really starts."

The whole thing was great. First he taught me how to make myself invisible, then how to make other people invisible, then he taught me how to make things invisible, and at the very end of the lesson he sprinkled a little more dust on me, but this time from his pocket.

"This will make you still have the magic when you're in human land."

He led me back to the starting room.

"By the way, my sister is really starting to get grossed out. Thanks," I said, and was in my room again.

The next few weeks we didn't go grocery shopping because the last time we went was a major big shop. When we finally grocery shopped I almost forgot about the magician until we got to the part of the grocery store where the candy was.

I decided to get him a packet of Hershey kisses. My mom asked me why I was getting all this candy. "Oh," I said. "I'll pay you all of the money back with my allowance. Promise, Ma!"

When I got back to my room the blind mouse was there and waiting. This time when I went through the backwards closet, he came with me. When we got to the magician's shop the mouse ran to the magician and curled up on top of his ear. Then I understood it all. I couldn't get in unless the blind mouse was there because he knew the magician and was his helper. The magician sent him out to get me every time he wanted me to come in. That's why he always knew when I was going to be here. Why the blind mouse knew it was me was because he was trained to smell anyone the magician wanted him to.

"So," said the magician, "I see you've discovered who my little mouse is."

"Yes," I smiled.

He had also taught me at our magic lesson how to sense when someone was reading your mind. For some reason this time he smiled when he saw the candy. He opened the package and took a bite.

"Mmmmm," he said. "Good. Listen, can I make you a deal? You just always get me theeese..."

He stared at the package with a discouraged look.

"Hershey kisses," I prompted him.

"Hershey kisses," he repeated. "What's in here that wasn't in any of the others? I tried them all just to make sure they weren't good!"

"Chocolate!" I said.

"I like it!" he said. "I like chocolate!"

"I'll be sure to get it every time we go grocery shopping."

"You know what?" he said, "I like chocolate even more than grossing out my sister. I think I'll stop grossing her out."

"I think you're right!" I said, "and I like magic more than grossing my sister out. I think I'll stop grossing her out too!!!!!!!!!!"

AFTERWARD

In the days that followed I gave the magician chocolate every time I went grocery shopping. And you know what? My sister actually started to like me!

THE END

Here's a new poem by Madeline Leue, who just happens to be Ian Leue's little sister. Her poem is a reflection on her brother's violin-playing.

Ian plays wonderful and good
He plays every day a lot, like he should.
Concerts too
He goes out to play
But he'll come back another day.

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KIDS' CORRESPONDENCE PAGES:

I forget where I copied this from, but I figure someone out there can make good use of it: Thanks, Jerome, wherever you are, and thanks, Jerome's mom!

Our son has made a homeschooling Homepage on the Internet. It covers both local and national homeschooling and contains links to resources necessary to successful homeschooling—such as complete books online. Also, links to libraries, news groups, etc. If you have a site or know of one or would like info of your activities in this Homepage, please send the relevant information to him.

His address is
Jerome@halcyon.com.
The address of the homeschooling homepage is:
http://www.halcyon.com/jerome/home.html.

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Here is a pen pal you might want to contact. This one is from Jerry Mintz's AERO newsletter:

Russia:
Hello! My name is Galiy. I am ten. I live in Moscow. I have many friends in Moscow and I want to have friends in America.
Write to: Galiy: 15 Parkovaia Street, Moscow, Russia: h. 38.38.

Lisbon Falls, Maine:
Zoë Blöwen-Ledoux, fourteen, is the editor of *Self-Schoolers Network News.* You may subscribe ($10 for 8 issues - see ad) by writing her at RR 1, Box 452, Lisbon Falls, ME 04252 or calling 207-353-5454.

Wanted:

Your literary musings, fantasies, poems, articles, narratives, letters, photos, drawings, info, questions, comments! If we get enough fast enough, we may just do another kids' issue sooner than we had planned.

And please don't get bent out of shape because I am setting kids' stuff apart in one issue! I want this one to be by, for and about the people most deeply affected by our nutty society, and give them a voice uncensored! And that's you guys. The adults can look on for a change. But hey, if you want something different, let me know, OK?

Send to Mary, editor,
72 Philip St., Albany, NY 12202,
or Fax us at 518-462-6836.

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This is the second of two stories sent us by Amelia Brommer, age fourteen, a student at Arthur Morgan School, written over a two-year period. Send us one of your own!

BEYOND MY SANDY TOES

by Amelia Rose Brommer

"Can you tell me where he's gone?" she had asked, her eyes shining full of hope. I searched her face for an answer. I found none. My palms began to drip, sticky with sweat, and my red ball I was holding slipped from my grasp. Was I supposed to know what she was talking about? I looked deeper and harder into her eyes. Was I going deaf? Had she said something before that I had missed?

Her eyes, so filled with unanswered questions, now changed to confused anger. She pushed me backwards. As I fell I saw her dart away, back to the dark outline of the woods where she had come from.

What did she want? This and many other questions danced and tumbled through my head that night. Who was she looking for? Who's "he?" Is "he" me? No... it can' t be me. I've never seen her before... or wait... Is she that face, that face that has watched me for so long? Is she that one who' s always with me but never there? Or maybe is she a messenger for the one I've been eternally bound to, the one my mother used to talk of, the one who is my equal and partner?

My head swims with unanswered questions. I sink into my bed. I let its warm quilted arms comfort my sore bones and hot face. I let its flannel fingers wipe away my tears. My fevered body now cools and I sleep.

"Tom ... Tom, wake up.... Thomas, get out of bed!" I was rudely awakened the next morning by Evelyn, a skinny, freckly, laughing-eyed brat who was unfortunately my baby sister. She managed to pull and shove until—"Thud!" —I landed sprawled on the ground. It only took one bluffing glance to send her running from the room.

"Mom!" she screamed, halfway between a laugh and a frightened squeak. "Tommy' s up!" This was not unusual and, like most mornings, I started my day mean and sleepy-eyed.

For the next week I could think of nothing but that girl, and the same old questions rolled helplessly and unanswered around in my weakening mind. It was like a disease thinking of her. I became withdrawn and moody. I snapped at people constantly and more than once sent Evelyn crying to our mom.

Gradually I forgot about the girl, thinking I would never see her again, so you can imagine my surprise to see her nine years later. I was now sixteen and I had come home from military school for the summer. My family and I were at the beach.

Even so many years later I still was not the same old Tom. It seemed to me that those many years ago on that fateful day when I had dropped my sweaty red ball, I had also dropped a part of myself, the part that makes you happy and nice. I had never found my ball, so did that also mean that I would never find my happiness? All I know is I lost my ball, my happiness, and the girl.

I was now standing, throwing my ham sandwich piece by piece into the darkening green-gray sea. The last sliver of the sun was slipping and shimmering deeper and deeper, farther and farther into the swirling depths of the sea. I felt as though my sanity would dive in after it, or that I might shatter into 3,004 pieces like my ham sandwich that now floated just beyond my sandy toes.

The sun was beckoning to me to follow him, and I would have if something had not bumped my restless foot. I stooped over, trying to make out the round red object.

"Oh!" I gasped. Could it be, maybe be? Was it my long lost ball...? Yes!

I tried to pick it up but it was covered in a seven-year-old's sweat and slipped from my grasp down and away to the hissing foam of the sea. I made a motion towards it but stopped, for a slender shape now appeared in the corner of my eye, and all of a sudden there she was, moving fast and steady towards me. I stood up and patiently waited for her.

"Can you tell me where he's gone?" she asked, her eyes shining once again full of hope. I smiled and held out a shaking hand. She smiled, but once again she pushed her long, bony fingers against my chest, pushing me breathless to the hard sand. But before I could feel the all too familiar pain, her bony hand was held out to me and instinctively I took it. With surprising strength she lifted me up and twirled me around and around. As our hands slipped from each other's grasp, I was afraid that I would fall to the sand so hard I would die. But when our fingers kissed their last goodbye and all my frightened hand felt was air, I did not fall. Instead I flew up and up into the appearing stars. I was now whole, but forever lost to the world.

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This delightful reminiscence is the first of a group of essays written, not by "chronological kids," but by adults whose aliveness to the immediacy of their experience makes it very clear that the child inside is both alive and well!

OLD RHINEBECK KIDS

by Connie Frisbee-Houde

This summer my pilot husband and I flew our small, 1940's-vintage, two-seater airplane into Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome, New York, to watch the air show of early aviation and old World War I aircraft. The grounds include a number of hangars, a grass airfield, audience seating, a picnic area, a small pond, and wooded areas. We arrived early to eat our lunch at a picnic table next to the pond and a small, people-use-only covered bridge on the edge of the pond. All around the edge of the pond grew beautiful purple loosestrife 5 to 6 feet tall, with a few places where a small group of kids could gather. I had remembered from years before that there had been ducks on the pond. I wondered where they were. Before long, a goose appeared. He must have smelled the food from the picnickers that gather on the grounds before the main events.

This one goose paddled up to the bridge area to see what was happening. A family with two children, 5 and 7 years of age, walked by and the kids stopped to look. They were eating French fries and hot dogs and began to entice the goose to come to eat the pieces of roll from their hands. The goose was a little hesitant, not wanting to come too close, so the kids threw the bread from the hot dog roll into the water for the goose. The water was quite muddy so you could not see the bottom of the pond. Suddenly there appeared a fish after the bread. The father told the children it was a catfish. Apparently the word was out in the fish domain...FOOD! More fish magically surfaced. The kids delightedly began to shout, "Look at the catfish over there! And there!" Because of the excited sounds these two kids were making, a number of other children came running to see what was happening. The catfish lazily came to the surface to see if they could benefit from this noon-time feeding. They would slowly stick their whiskered, large-eyed faces up to the surface, grab the bread, and disappear. The kids were fascinated. It struck me that this was the gathering of the clans—of the catfish and of the children.

The loosestrife surrounding the pond helped to create an island of mystery. Not only did more children come, but the ducks I had remembered swam up to the feeding area. One of the children noticed a snake, and the kids again were all fascinated watching and pointing, "Daddy, look at the snake." Then a very interesting thing happened. One of the fathers became fearful for his children and started to tell them not to go near the snake and, by association, the water. The kids stepped back, not sure what to do in their excitement. Some of the braver ones let their curiosity take hold and, in defiance of the warning, stepped closer to find out for themselves about this forbidden fruit. At the same time another father came by who recognized the snake as a harmless water snake. The first father took some time to back off from restraining his kids and creating a fear response in some of the children. The new father began to talk to the kids about what they were seeing, answering their questions. The kids were not held back for long and soon forgot any indication of fear. Next a painted turtle came to investigate what was happening.

Who was watching who? Some of the kids who did not have food to throw or drop in the water began to pick up some of the small gravelly stones that were on the path to throw at the goose, ducks and fish. They wanted so much to be a part of the activity. Very nicely one of the parents told them not to throw stones, and the kids reluctantly stopped. The father who had identified the snake had also noticed that one of the catfish had only one eye and a bruise on his head. He pointed this out to the kids, telling them that this injury may have been caused by a rock. Many of the kids were visibly effected by this possibility, and all the questions just seemed to rush forth, "Could that really happen? How does it feel?" The kids' excitement was so great they forgot about throwing stones.

My husband and I were transfixed watching this community of people that had grown up spontaneously around the little pond, observing the natural happenings. I wonder if at some time the fish were also taking this opportunity to teach their little ones about this occasional food source...to teach them to grab the food and disappear into the mud so they could not be harmed by anything. Were the younger fish just as curious as the kids? Did the younger fish not feel any threat? Were they similar to the children who did feel fear until it was introduced by an adult? What fish game was this? Perhaps the pond was acting as a mirror.

Who was seeing whom?

Connie Frisbee-Houde is a member of the Free School community, occasional contributor to ΣΚΟΛΕ, co-editor of both ΣΚΟΛΕ and the new Journal of Family Life, *photographer, costume designer and maker, part-time teacher at the school, lover of children and cats, and an extraordinary gardener.*

Connie

The following article comes originally from A Voice for Children, *published in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in the Fall, 1994, issue, and reprinted in the* Summerhill Trust Journal, *edited by Albert Lamb, a Summerhill graduate who has continued to affiliate himself closely with his school. Albert writes of it as follows:*

> This issue [of *AVFC*] was published as a tribute to A.S. Neill who *the Voice* called a "certain, if reluctant and unpretentious mentor to thousands of people throughout the world." This newsletter contains many fine tributes. Write to Edward M. Jones, the editor, at 7 Casa del Oro Court. Santa Fe, NM 87505 for a copy. Each issue of the Voice carries a statement on the back acknowledging the help of the 15th Street School Foundation. The Trust Journal should probably be doing the same thing as both the Trust and your editor have received grants from this Foundation. Without these grants this issue might not be here. Our thanks to Ed Jones for having got Zoë to write this piece.

A.S. NEILL AS A FATHER—A PERSONAL MEMORY

by Zoë Neill Readhead

Being the daughter of the great educator A.S. Neill is probably the most difficult thing I can think of to write about. Many people are keen to know what sort of father he was and what my life as a child in Summerhill was like. I am often asked about Neill by school visitors and I do my best to give them a picture but the memories are very personal and therefore difficult to convey without it sounding either smug or totally uninteresting. I tend to remember things like his morning cold baths, watching "Wells Fargo" (which he loved) on TV and our imaginary friends, Rosie and Posie, who got up to all sorts of nonsense and eventually disappeared down the plug-hole of my bath.

Neill's ideas on child-rearing and education did not enter my life on a conscious level until I was in my teens. In other words, although I lived a special and unique childhood because of his ideas, on a day-to-day basis I was not really aware of the significance of it all. He may have been a champion of children, a hero throughout the world to those who care about children's rights, but to me he was just my Daddy.

As a father Neill was warm, witty, patient, and possessed an almost unique ability to keep out of the way. This was true of his life within Summerhill as well. He was able to let life pass by without feeling the need to interfere in any way. Some people think that he cultivated this quality to help the children in the school to grow away from adults and strengthen as individuals. I think this may be partly true, but I also think, knowing Neill as I did, that he was often so engrossed in his own thoughts that he really didn't notice things going on around him. My childhood memories of Summerhill very seldom include my father. My mother took a much more active part in the community while he tended to keep his distance and get on with his own affairs. That is not to suggest that he was not involved at all. His keen eyes watched all the children and he made very accurate assessments about their problems and development. But there is a mythical view of Neill the lover of children who played with them and ventured off into the bushes with them to build huts or have tea parties which is not true. He may have been like that in his early years, before I was born, but later on he behaved like a normal adult and got on with his own business—except for special occasions when he needed to counsel a child for a particular reason.

Somehow he was not part of our lives at school while at the same time he was always THERE if we needed him. Of course he also had a lot to do with all of us on an "official" basis, e.g. discussions, meetings, spontaneous acting (he set scenes for us to act out in whatever way we wanted) and of course his famous stories on Sunday evenings. In meetings he spent a lot of time complaining about us using too much electricity or wasting too much food. He was a true Scot and never left an electric light burning if it wasn't needed, often walking along the top corridor at school and flicking the switch while you were sitting quietly reading a comic. He never saw you but was very apologetic when you shouted "Hey! Neill!!" To this day I cannot leave a light burning in an empty room.

Neill was a very "adult" person. He never tried to behave in a child-like way in order to gain ground with us kids. He could not bear Rock 'n' Roll music nor understand our teenage culture. He read "good" books and often complained to me about my taste in literature. He seldom swore and when he once used the word fuck to describe two ducks having sex it shocked me deeply. He loved Wagner and wished that I would listen to it with him. He once said to me that if you love a piece of music or prose it is no use unless you can share it with somebody. At the time I did not appreciate what he meant but now I often want to share things with my children. They, like me at the time, are not always interested!

Poor Neill, my biggest regret is having lost him at the age of twenty-seven when there was so much more to share with him. As a young thing, I was too busy growing and learning to spend much time with him in the sense that I would now. There are so many things I would like to discuss with him now that I have reared my own four children—some small disagreements too, I expect!

All of my childhood I was aware that he would die long before other kids' fathers would. He was sixty-four when I was conceived. Although I never worried about him dying prematurely, I used to have nightmares about his death and was always aware that I did not have him for long. When I was around six years old I had a dream about him being buried alive and a machine counting the time he had left. I woke up distraught and the dream hung over me for a long time. But being young you don't prepare for a parent's death, you live for today and probably just as well too. Now I feel that I should have spent more time with him so as not to waste a moment but, of course, I could not have spent more, nor would he have wanted me to. He lived to see Tony's and my daughter, Amy, born and grow into a lively toddler and our son, William, was born a few weeks before he died so he had a chance to hold him in his arms as well. I dearly wish that he could have known Henry and little Neill and that he could have watched them all grow up in the way that he pioneered—watched them go through his wonderful school and emerge as fine, gentle, strong individuals of whom he would be so proud. Those fine characteristics which they have they owe directly to their Grandfather, for without his foresight, compassion and tremendous energy Summerhill would not have existed for them.

And our English friend Matthew Appleton, who is a "house parent" at Summerhill, has sent us yet another splendid article on his (and Zoë' and Albert's) school which in some ways is the best, the most illuminating, account of the school I've read, even including Neill's own accounts. Thanks, Matthew!

SUMMERHILL: A CHILDREN'S CULTURE.

by Matthew Appleton

A visitor to Summerhill, if s/he were to return five years later, would find that there were many new faces, and only a few that s/he recognized. This is due to the large turnover of both staff and children.[1] Of those familiar faces most would be amongst the older kids, though they would have changed a lot in five years, from scruffy, dirt-streaked House Kids, running around doing their own thing, to well groomed, sociable adolescents. There would be some familiar faces amongst the staff, but these would be outweighed by the new ones, some enthusiastic and eager to talk about their fresh experience of Summerhill, others more reserved, as they struggle with their own emotional reactions to the place.

Summerhill has been described elsewhere as 'the bare minimum of a school'. The description is a valid one in the sense that it has been designed to accommodate the needs of the children, rather than impose unnecessary restrictions and adult ideology upon them. Teachers are available to teach their various subjects if the children are interested. Houseparents provide first aid and wash dirty clothes, and the staff as a whole are there as adult members of the community to whom the kids can turn if they want adult company or advice. Cooking and cleaning is provided by the day staff. Zoe,[2] and her husband Tony, with the help of Sarah, the school secretary, deal with the administrative aspects of school life, such as finances and dealing with outside bodies.

The staff are responsible for deciding which rooms children should sleep in, with the exception of the older 'Carriage Kids', who make their own arrangements. It is also a staff decision as to when children move from one area of the school to the next, for example from the San to the House, or the Shack to the Carriages.[3]

Within this basic adult arrangement, which has been provided to give the children a safe space in which to live their lives, there is no adult imposition, only various adult opinions which carry no more weight than any other voice in the community.

The weekly meetings are an established part of community life. With the exception of a few health and safety laws the meeting decides upon what laws the community shall live by, and in making these decisions the adults have only one vote. just the same as the children. But this lack of adult authority or guidance does not mean that the children live in a vacuum. Although there will be some adults who are active and powerful members of the community, by and large the guiding light of community life will come from the older kids. They are, so to speak, the 'elders' f the community, many of whom have been at Summerhill longer than most of the staff, and will have much deeper understanding of its processes.

In my first term there was the unusual situation of the school having a large intake or new kids, while at the same time almost half the staff were new that term too. Of the remaining staff, many had only been there a few terms themselves, and there were many conflicting opinions about how best to handle situations. Zoë, who does not actually live in the school but at a local farm, came in daily, and I would often discuss problems that came up for me with her. I always found her advice helpful, and her insights deep. But apart from Zoë my main source of understanding came from talking to the big kids and listening to their impressions and feelings. This is something that I have seen many new staff struggle with, for they find it difficult to let go of the notion that adults should know best, or at least be seen to know best. It turns their sense of hard earned 'professionalism' on its head and appears to them topsy turvy, which is a shame, as there is a lot to be learnt there.

The big kids are mostly very active in community matters. It is usually one of the big kids who chairs the meetings. whilst another acts as secretary, taking the minutes. The older kids are also a strong voice in the meeting, drawing from their years of experience of community life and understanding of the younger kids. They also take on more normal roles, which they are voted into by the community as a whole. These include the Fines officer, who keeps a record of what people are fined in the meetings and makes sure they pay up. The Beddies Officers enforce the bedtimes each night. Ombudsmen deal with problems between people that are either too trivial to justify a meeting case, or cannot wait until the next meeting.

There are also various committees, which are also voted in by the community, and consist largely of the big kids. There is the Gram Committee that looks after the school's disco equipment and acts as D.J.s on 'Gram nights' and for parties. At various times there has been a Social Committee, that organises social events, such as games and entertainments, a Table Tennis Committee, to ensure that the Table Tennis equipment was kept in good repair, a Bike Committee, to help the younger kids keep their bikes in repair, a Food Committee, to keep a good relationship between the kitchen and the kids, a Swindling Committee, to make sure none of the small kids were being cheated by some of the more devious characters in the community whilst swapping or buying things, a Visitors Committee to show visitors around. These have come and gone as the need arises, and are only the handful that come straight to mind as I think back over the seven years I have been at the school. No doubt there are others.

There are also committees created to raise money and organise special events, such as parties at Halloween, Guy Fawkes, St. Valentine's Day and End of Term. On all of these various committees there will also be an occasional staff, and a handful of younger kids working alongside the big kids. But it is the big kids who are most active in organising things and are passing on traditions that have developed within the school to its newer and younger members.

There will be certain games that are traditionally played at the party, or ways of celebrating, such as on the stroke of midnight, on the eve of St. Valentine's Day, a large crowd of kids running around the school kissing whoever they can find. Even though the bedtime laws are being broken the Beddies Officers take no notice, as it is an accepted, albeit unspoken exception to the law. There is also the Midnight Walk to a local beach at Summer half term. This is organized by the Half Term Committee, who arrange wood for a fire, soup and marshmallows to roast, and transport for the younger kids if they are too tired to walk back.

The single most important event of the term is the end of term party, when the lounge is closed and decorated by the End of Term Committee. They decide amongst themselves on a theme and the walls are covered in paper and painted to depict that theme. In recent years it has included such themes as madness, black and white, inside the waste bowl (this being the bowl into which un-wanted food is emptied at mealtimes), Batman, the history of music, the Jungle Book, the school meeting, cities, a carnival, a haunted house, to name a few. Nobody else is allowed to see the lounge or know what the theme is until the party begins and the lounge is opened again.

The end of term party is an emotional affair, not only because everyone is preparing to go home and will not see each other for several weeks, but also because it is when the community says goodbye to those who are leaving and not coming back. At midnight everyone links hands and gathers in a circle around the people leaving.. 'The Gram' begins to play 'Auld Lang Syne' and everyone sings along. When the music ends the circle breaks up and closes in around those in the middle. Friends hug each other, often with tears running down their faces and sobs shaking their bodies, maybe for the last time, as some will return to countries across the other side of the world. Certainly they are saying goodbye to a way of life they have been a part of and shared together, sometimes for many years.

It is difficult to express the emotional intensity of such partings, and even as I write about it I find my eyes are welling up with tears. Living in Summerhill is like being part of a huge family. As one girl said, "The boys are all my brothers and the girls are all my sisters. I love them very much." Another girl told me, "I feel closer to the people I know least well here than I did to my best friend in my old school."

Many of the younger kids feel the loss of older kids leaving acutely. In fact I have seen more emotion generated by big kids leaving than by many of the staff who have come and gone (although kids do form very strong attachments to individual staff, and are upset when they leave. But the fact is that many staff do not stay as long as the kids who have gone through the school to become big kids, nor are they necessarily as involved in the life of the community, although, again, some are very active and involved[4]). Sometimes there have been obvious friendships whereby one of the big kids has taken one of the younger kids under their wing, or maybe there have been less obvious links, but one to which the younger child has attached a lot of meaning. It could be a certain compliment, or show of affection or perhaps a moment when the bigger kid helped them accomplish a task or deal with a problem. Such events may seem of little importance to an adult, but to the younger children to whom the big kids are cool and powerful people, and closer to their own age and immediate future than the staff, these can be thrilling, exciting moments. I remember myself as a boy the elation I felt when an older boy paid me some attention. It really made me feel like I was somebody. One of older girls told me once, "When you're a little kid you like the staff, but you don't look up to them. It's the big kids you look up to. You look at them and you think maybe I can be like that one day."

The games that the smaller kids play are often games that they have learnt from seeing bigger kids play them, such as 'Kick the Can' or 'Touch Prisoners'. Sometimes one of the big kids will organise 'The Murder Game'. This is a game that was devised by one of the big kids some years ago. Usually most of the school will sign up for it. It consists of various people being murderers, private detectives, and undercover private detectives. Everyone else is normal. but no one knows who the undercover P.I.s or murderers are. The murderers have to be killed themselves. They must carry 'murder notes' with them at all times, with the names of all the normal people on, and can be searched by the P.I.s if they are acting suspiciously or have been seen killing someone. It is an exciting game, with lot's of mutual suspicion, and can last for days. More recently one of the older kids devised a variation on the theme called 'The Cold War Game', with the players being split into two sides and various people playing the roles of generals, lieutenants, spies, and military police etc. The object of the game is to find out who the other side's general is and kill him. Even though the inventors of both games have now left, the games continue to be played by kids who will never know them.

As the kids move up through the school from San through to Carriages, each stage has its own sense of being a rite of passage. The youngest kids, the San Kids, have the earliest bedtime and the community has a strong feeling of protectiveness towards them as they are the smallest and most vulnerable kids in the school. There are even some special laws specifically to look after the needs of the San Kids. The next age group up are the House Kids. These are the kids that Neill called the school 'gangsters'. They are more independent than the San Kids, spending a lot of time playing off on their own away from adults. They also tend to be more daring, breaking the school laws in various minor ways. Then there are the Shack Kids, who are beginning to get a sense that they are not House Kids anymore and will soon be the big kids. Lastly the Carriage Kids, who have finally become 'the big kids' and start to feel a sense of their power in the community and the responsibilities that go along with it.

There may be time when a group of big kids has just left and the school is quite young for awhile. At such times the self-government may be weak, and the staff have to take more of an active role in things. There may also be times when some of the staff harangue the big kids to 'get their act together' because they are being kept awake at night or the meetings are sloppy. But the bulk of social traditions and responsibilities within the community are not dictated by adults, they are handed down by example and interaction from one generation of big kids to the next. So although Summerhill is 'the bare minimum of a school' it is not just a vacuum. but a self-perpetuating, self-regulating children's culture in which kids feel they can belong and be themselves at the same time.

FOOTNOTES

1. There are various reasons for this high turnover. With the kids it may be the child has been disruptive at home or at school and when they begin to 'improve' at Summerhill they are taken out again, so that they may have "a proper education". These are the kids who were sent to Summerhill as a final resort rather than a first choice. Some kids are taken out because their parents have become anxious as they are not going to class. Often such parents have an intellectual attraction to Summerhill, but in their hearts they do not have the trust in their children that the school does. Other times the concerns may be purely financial and the parents find they can no longer afford the school fees. The high turnover of staff also has many reasons. Summerhill is not an easy place for adults to live. It is noisy, demanding and offers little adult privacy. It requires a great deal of self-motivation, as there is no career structure that offers rewards or promotion. The pay is low, and many adults find it difficult to let go of their preconceptions and relate to the children as equal members of the community, without losing their own sense of adult identity. However within the staff there is also a strong core of long-standing adults who help new staff integrate.

2. Zoë Readhead, the daughter of A.S. Neill, who now runs the school.

3. These are areas within the school, to which the kids belong, depending largely on their age and to a lesser extent how long they have been

at the school.

4. My own impression is although the big kids do essentially play the role of being the 'elders' of the community, the consistent presence of a core group of adults who both understand and deeply care about the community and its processes is important. This is as important from the perspective of knowing when to step back and say nothing, as well as when to get involved as a caring member of the community. The potential problem that such a community faces with its inherent high turnover of staff, is that it may go through periods when such a presence may be rather thin on the ground. My experience of Summerhill is that this has never been acute enough to constitute a real problem, but I believe it is a potential weakness worth acknowledging and being aware of when we are involved in this field of work.

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I absolutely love the following article written by our favorite Knight Templar for the children, George Dennison having passed on! It is my pleasure to present our dear John to you in a more personal frame of mind than usual—and what pours forth is pure gold, as you may see! Thanks, John!

PERSONAL SOLUTIONS; FAMILY SOLUTIONS

by John Taylor Gatto

"If you have no time for your family you want to ask yourself, 'Why must I always be do-ing something?' God made us human be-ings, not human do-ings!"

—Heard over a car radio between Omaha
and North Platte, Nebraska

"Do nothing. Time is too precious to waste," said Buddha; if that sounds like nonsense, stop reading now, but if you feel you've been conditioned like a laboratory rat by the pervasive propaganda of 20th century institutions like schools and banks and hospitals, read on. One quick way to tell if mechanism has invaded your living tissue is to consider how important lists are to your life. Home improvement lists, self-improvement lists, lists of meetings, appointments, responsibilities, things to remember? Does list management fill much of your time?

And does your social life consist of watching actors pretend to be real people or telling your friends what you bought, what you nearly bought and what you are going to buy? If somewhere along the way your life has come to seem pointless, then read on as I tell you how Janet and I came to do nothing with our farm on purpose. It might help you to understand what Buddha had on his mind.

Twenty-seven years ago, after six years of living in Manhattan—I from Pittsburgh and Janet from Oyster Bay—we bought 134 acres of land in rural New York State located midway between Ithaca where I'd gone to school and Cooperstown where the Baseball Hall of Fame is. The land was in Chenango County, in the southeastern corner of the Burned-Over District, an area of great spiritual ferment in the 19th century which had produced the

Mormons, the Perfectionists, the Millerites, the incident that launched the Anti-Masonic Party, and a host of other individualistic, quirky movements that attest to how rich life can be in an a-systematic society. I bought the land with a fellow schoolteacher sight unseen, in a manner I'll explain in a moment. Chenango County was, is and always will be, I think, lightly populated, a corn and cow/sheep land not fit for the attention of sophisticated tourists and real-estate speculators.

The population of the nearest town to my farm is the same now as it was in 1905 and the whole county has about 50 inhabitants a square mile, about 1/6th less than it had in 1835 in the glory days of the Chenango Canal. Even in 1993 plenty of beautiful land is available there for $500 an acre or less, 90 minutes from Syracuse, two hours from Albany, four hours from New York City. I paid much less than that in 1968 when I acquired the property, about $48 an acre with a 7 year mortgage at 6%. That's probably the chief reason I bought the land unseen when I saw the ad in the real-estate listings of the Sunday New York Times.

That particular Sunday I had been sitting with friends ranting and raving about how many great bargains are always available if you know what value is. I offered to prove the point on the real estate pages. "Just buy what no one else wants as long as you're sure that the reason for not wanting it—dirt roads, no running water, things like that—are dumb." Then read

> Tumbling Waterfall Retreat
> 134 acres, 7 year mortgage, 6%. Old barn,
> pond sites, 5 miles from Oxford, New York.

The next day I picked up the phone, dialed the agent, and told him I'd wire the down payment that day. If you know your own mind (which isn't a priority of schooling) you don't often need expert advice to make decisions because you are the only real expert on what you need and what you can live with. How did I know the land was any good? That's easy; any good for what? What should it be good for, to make money?, I thought it ought to offer a private place away from machinery where you could do just about anything you wanted without interference and nosy neighbors. With a little long-distance research I knew it was good for that so I bought it without worrying. At $500 down and around $100 a month payments almost anyone could have bought that land if they weren't afraid.

What was to be afraid of? The taxes were about $300 a year and a nearby farmer paid $100 to cut off the hay. He paid us to cut our "grass" .

Wild land exists to put us smack in the middle of animal nature, creatures who regulate their lives in a different way than we do ours; it exists to teach seasons, fertility and that there is no death, just endless translations from one form to another. Wild land gives you back the sky and the harmonies of the planet, but it charges an invisible price for what it has to give—you must leave it wild or it loses its power and becomes a green office.

By the time my wild land came along I was thirty-two and was just beginning to reach the stage in my own life where I could see that doing things the right way, rationalizing your time on the best principles of human engineering and living your life from the prison chamber of your mind instead of your heart was a catastrophic mistake. The "life" part of life just won't engineer all the way unless you're willing to become a mechanism. All the rewards of the good life that can be counted like money and titles and honors and compleat property requiring expert advice to manage—the material things—were at bottom disturbingly unrewarding. I hadn't always thought that way for I had gone to two Ivy League colleges specifically to accumulate material and display it as evidence of my worth. And I did that for a while but it left me feeling worthless. A great puzzle for many of us.

After I bought that land I forgot the lesson I'm trying to teach you—or rather that Buddha is trying to teach you and me. For years I raced about digging ponds, chopping trees, clearing paths, pulling rocks, unclogging channels, planting—always I was making lists, plans, agendas. I was always " improving" things. I loved to drive into the little towns of the county to shop and see movies and sit around pretending to be a country gentlemen, but regularly Janet would ask why we couldn't just stay on the land, why did we always have to be going and doing? At first that baffled me, but later as I reflected on it I understood that Janet was keeping score a different way and that intrigued me. Stay on the land and do *what*? Work, of course, to "improve" it, but then what?

One day after finishing some important project I made a list of all the things I had yet to do according to the Master Plan of my land ambition. There were fifty major projects remaining, and at two a year, which was all I could manage racing back and forth from New York City on weekends and summers, I would be sixty-five when they were done. According to my schedule I could begin enjoying my land thirty years down the line.

Something was dreadfully wrong. What was wrong was that I was a fool. Like so many of us I was a part in an abstract idea-machine called "progress"; like an accountant I measured success by the bottom line of things gotten out of the way, finished, terminated. That's how a computer might be set to keep track of work, but the pleasure of being real lies in the process, not the mere product, primarily in "being" and only peripherally in "doing." In the world we've fashioned built on our envy of machines we've arranged things to reverse the natural order of importance; somewhere deep down everyone understands this, but in avoiding the truth we assign ourselves a miserable destiny trying to *be* machines. Those who succeed best at this lead horrible lives regardless of appearances. Watching and being part of the natural world and understanding it is the great domestic challenge—without success at this we never have a home—what Nature can give stops giving when it is over-regulated, or exploited with ag school technology and bulldozers.

We all need the wildness of the non-human planet to restore our spirits, not parks and beaches where the human element is still the central focus and regulation runs rampant. Instead we collect evidence of our domination by mapping it, scheduling it and controlling it. And all that gives us is a green imitation of city life and some square tomatoes.

So now I do nothing with my farm. I go there to let it teach me things. sometimes I putter but not often because time is too precious to waste. The living quarters are in an old barn with "1906" drawn in the concrete on the milking floor. My original intention was to build a broad covered porch around the whole structure and arrange the inside like a private cathedral with a fifty-foot ceiling. Still not a bad idea but now, twenty-seven years later it remains a barn and that turned out to be a better idea. There's about 1200 square feet of open space on the hay floor and way up in the air against the roof is a 20 X 20 insulated room reached by climbing three banks of wooden steps. Kenny, who was the boyfriend of one of my college students, built the room, roofed and refloored the barn, in exchange for 5 acres of land. Good deal all around.

But much of the time we don't use the insulated room, instead sleeping in two lovely old beds under the lofty roof with mice racing about the rafters in plain view (not too many), bats squeaking in the eaves, barn swallows twittering and the most amazing light pouring in through inch-wide spaces between the vertical wall boards.

It's very much like living in a bird house. We draw water from a gorge a half-mile away which probably should have been tested but never was; drinking hundreds of gallons, at first tentatively, then with delight, was the test. No water ever tasted like our gorge water run over rocks; I've come. to see that participating with the water you drink is a wonderful way to feel good; it took some time to get used to the walk back and forth and to clear away the machined notion that time was somehow being wasted.

Bathing is out of a bucket or in pools and ponds, and the toilet is wherever you are with the details varying according to the person and a proper respect for such things, On Manhattan's famous Upper Westside we have three bathrooms but they give us no better results. In over a quarter-century I can honestly say we never missed running water or plumbing, and the transition from both was effected almost at once. That was surprising, how close to the surface our human good sense is, in spite of all the conditioning and mechanical overlay.

Our barn holds about 3000 books which must fend for themselves in all seasons housed in many makeshift facilities. All were bought at country auctions for a dollar or two a box, lots of 19th century evangelical stuff, hand-colored children's books, Crime Club thrillers, whatever—when you read in a barn it's like discovering reading all over again. It's the greatest fun, far beyond television, movies and Broadway shows; having had both over a reasonably long lifetime I feel I can say that honestly.

The main activity on our farm is keeping animals, as it is on many farms, but the difference is we don't own any of them, and they feed themselves. Deer are so plentiful they are a daily experience, snorting, playing like young dogs, hanging out; wild turkey are common, too, and at night they flock by the squadron in the gorge behind the barn; snakes abound but no-one has ever been bitten, skunks, turtles, raccoons, coyote, fox, mink, one bear and a large colony of blue herons that land on the pond and fish like pterodactyls off our half-sunken dock, The bear moved in on the stream at the foot of the hill last year. Live and let live works better than regulation; it's nice to have a bear around.

The most unbelievable creatures of all are the night moths. Janet discovered these one night just outside the barn flying in the half light; their shapes and colors are so divorced from any normal insect life I'm familiar with I felt transported into a prehistory when the world was new just watching them.

When I used to schoolteach, my kids and I would discuss style a lot, getting a style of your own and how that must be done . I gradually came to feel it was very difficult unless you were alone a lot, had time and space to yourself, were free of the need to attend other people's urgencies all the time—or the urgencies of a commercial world. How can you expect to be unique if every minute you draw models from other people and the shadows of other people drawn from television? How can the unique destiny that is in every one of us exercise itself if you always submit to the scrutiny and judgment of authorities? Authorities on what? Certainly not on you unless you have been diminished into something predictable, tamed by regulation, simplification and rationalization. A steady diet of that will waste all your time.

Compelling evidence exists that we are meant to be unique individuals who live in harmony with other unique individuals: think of the harmony of snow falling, but the brilliant oneness of each snowflake; think of the harmony of beach sand, but the brilliant oneness of each sand grain; think of the harmony of a field of grass, but the brilliant oneness of each blade in shape, and even hue. Are we that way, too? Consider your own fingerprint, unlike any on earth, your unique signature—can you think of a reason for evolution to produce such a signal unless the organism is one of a kind? And if you think of God instead of evolution it will be even easier to deduce a purpose in all of this. If people are inherently sortable into a few categories—as industrial civilization makes them out to be—then the fingerprint is a crazy detail. It only makes sense as a guide to the individual experiment that each of us is.

As Buddha said, time is too precious to waste doing much of anything;. I'm still learning what that means, but I never might have known about this at all if I hadn't bought a big piece of wild, unregulated scrub land and left it that way. I hope my children's children leave it that way, too, if circumstances allow them to inherit it. I learned just to be from watching sunlight in the pond, birds taking dust baths on the dirt road, frogs watching me as I watched them. Janet once said, "Hey, look at us, we're watching the birds, not just 'bird watching'". It's an important difference.

Of course we *do* things, too: we eat a lot of wild foods that we used to call weeds, we dig up blueberry bushes for gifts, build bonfires at night, transplant wild flowers, stuff like that. I finally figured out why real farms are often messy looking around the buildings, when you kick over something unimportant it doesn't need to be picked up right away, and nothing should ever be thrown away that might be useful tomorrow,

In the time we won back decontrolling our reflexes we came to learn to manage our spirits better; it's impossible to live this way without coming to love nearly everything, and feeling an obligation to it, too. We have a laboratory of nature stretched out daily for our understanding, not our exploitation. The greatest use of wild places isn't in "using" them but just in being there.

The original meaning of the word "school" (schola) was a place that afforded solitude, silence and freedom from duties so the student would have maximum opportunity to open himself to the universe and learn. It's difficult to find such a school. Our institutions are too occupied in watching us for signs of unacceptable deviation, in regulating each minute of the year according to expert prescriptions. As the quality of life imposed by our politically progressive regimen declines steadily into frightening subregions of the soul it makes sense for prudent people to go in search of personal solutions. It's only human to invite other people to save themselves, too, but if no one listens there is still a world that *will*, out there to be found; there is still a world inside yourself and your loved ones to protect and enjoy.

Personal solutions exist. Out of personal solutions great social solutions can be put together. The one I've described just now is within reach—wild land, the less road-accessible and "improved" the better, is available in abundance within an easy drive of every metropolitan area in America, much more so today than it was a hundred years ago. Get some as soon as you can, the wilder and scruffier the better. Then do nothing. It will be your school. And it will become your home.

And here's an article by Pat Montgomery, whose "inner child" may have been disciplined by many years of the conscious channeling of her creative energy into organizational efficacy, but don't let that fool you! The pixie within come out at the most unexpected moments!

One of the founders of the National Coalition of Alternative Schools as well as of her own Clonlara School and Clonlara's Home Based Education Program in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Pat is also a noted author and lecturer. She was the first American alternative schools educator to introduce Japan to both alternative and home education, and has also been active in the defense of all children's right to educational choices. See also the letter from ΣΚΟΛΕ's old buddy Nat Needle, staff member of Clonlara, beginning on page 123.

This item was taken from the Winter, 1995 issue of the NCACS Network News, *PO Box 15036, Santa Fe, NM 87506.*

HOME EDUCATION IN JAPAN

by Pat Montgomery

Tokyo Shure is a school for "school refusers" located in Tokyo, Japan. It was founded ten years ago by Keiko Okuchi, a parent and a former public schoolteacher. The ties between Tokyo Shure and Clonlara are long-lived and solid, from the founding of the school to the exchange visits between Clonlara campus school students/ staff and Tokyo Shure students staff to the wedding of Nat Needle, Dean of Clonlara campus high school and Mihoko Wakabayashi, teacher at Tokyo Shure, to the "Home School Symposium" held by Tokyo Shure. I was one of the keynote speakers at this event.

First, a definition is in order. A school refuser is just that: a student who refuses to attend school. This is a phenomenon that is virtually nonexistent in the United States, but it is a major problem in Japan. I saw a ten story hospital in Tokyo entirely devoted to treating kids of all ages—four through eighteen years—whose illness springs only from their refusal to go to school. They are definitely ill with very real phobias, depression, suicidal tendencies, etc. They feel ostracized from their families, relatives, neighbors, the society at large. The pressures rampant in the educational system in Japan are more than these children can tolerate; more even, than the painful alienation that refusing to go to school can bring. The number of elementary age school refusers has more than doubled in the past five years; for older students the number has more than tripled.

I was very touched by the answer Keiko Okuchi gave to an assembly of parents, staff, and students when asked how she came to start Tokyo Shure. (I tell you this, not in a shy way!) "When Pat Montgomery was in Japan in 1984, I attended a seminar on alternative schools that she gave. I was a public school teacher at the time. I knew that changes were desperately needed in the public schools, but I was also very concerned about school refusers and I felt drawn to create a place where they could feel accepted and not be estranged from their families and friends. Pat pointed out that many others in that seminar had expressed concerns about public schools and were intent upon reforming them. You, Keiko, are the only one who feels drawn to help refusers. You have two choices: stay in the public schools and try to make a difference, or follow your urgings to create a school."

Keiko *san* made her choice; today Tokyo Shure has a full enrollment of 100 students on one campus, and 30 students (so far) on its newly-established second campus elsewhere in Tokyo.

Last Spring, thirteen Clonlara students and two staff members, Nat Needle and Barb Maling, traveled to Japan and spent two weeks visiting Tokyo Shure and touring the country. They stayed at the home of Tokyo Shure students. Then, the Tokyo Shure students and staff accompanied Clonlara's group to the United States. They attended the NCACS Conference in Virginia, toured parts of the country, and stayed at the homes of Clonlara families while in Ann Arbor. Tokyo Shure had applied for and received a grant from the Japan Foundation to pay (in part) for the trips.

Nat Needle met Mihoko Wakabayashi some years prior to the Spring '94 trip exchange; by that time, they were pledged to one another, and they got married in the Buddhist Temple in Ann Arbor last August. Several guests commented about the symbolic "wedding" of Clonlara and Tokyo Shure that also occurred.

Konomi Shinohara Corbin, Japanese translator and interpreter at Clonlara, accompanied me to the Tokyo Shure Home School Symposium. Keiko *san* expected perhaps 300 people to attend that gathering, since home education is not widely known or understood as an alternative in Japan yet. Eight hundred eighty-nine (889) people filled the auditorium to capacity.

It was a day long event. Paul Bentley, Chair of "Education Otherwise," the national homeschool group of England, and I explained and described homeschooling practices in Britain and the U.S.

Panel members responded to our presentations. One was herself a school refuser as a Japanese child. Her father supported her in that choice, realizing that the school was stifling the life of his child. (Most Japanese parents do not support their child's choice because they, too, feel pressure from relatives, neighbors, the community, and society itself.) It became obvious by the questions and comments from the Symposium audience that homeschooling is a fast growing phenomenon; the word is spreading.

> The reasons for choosing home education are different for Japanese families than for Americans, but there is a common goal:
> *To Rescue the Children.*

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I hope this amazing article by John Chodes which follows gets the exposure in all sorts of publications which it so richly deserves! John Chodes is doing us all a tremendous service in resurrecting this extraordinary, albeit brief, demonstration of how totally artificial the shibboleths of the class system in regard to the teaching of working class children truly are! Read it and weep! The truth is that we've known for thousands of years—let alone since the reign of George III—how easy it is to teach kids the three R's! My gratitude to John for sending it to us.

Dear Ms. Leue:

I believe the enclosed article, "The Lancaster System: An Alternative to Public Schools," would be of value to your publication. The appropriate information is on the back of each illustration. My credentials are at the end of the essay.

THE LANCASTER SYSTEM: AN ALTERNATIVE TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by John Chodes

Public education has failed. It often produces illiterate, spiritless graduates who have neither the motivation nor the skills to find a good job or succeed. As a result, private sector schooling is growing by leaps and bounds. Unfortunately, these private schools are associated with small, localized efforts or élitism and high tuition.

There was however, a private enterprise system in the 19th century which taught millions of poor kids around the world for a few dollars a year. It was called "The Lancaster System". It encouraged children to develop personal initiative and responsibilities. Students worked at adult jobs within the schools and got paid for them. They learned to read and write in months instead of years.

The Lancaster System was also controversial and revolutionary because it caused considerable social upheaval by enabling the poor to break down traditional class and economic barriers with their new skills. The Lancaster idea may offer a clue to the way out of the mess we are in today.

Joseph Lancaster was born in the slums of London in 1778. As a young Quaker, he experienced the sting of religious discrimination. His family's faith barred him from attending the schools for the poor run by the Church of England. So his father taught him at home. Embittered by this painful memory, by age 18 he was instructing London urchins in his father's attic, for a penny a lesson.

He was soon deluged with hundreds of students. With so many pupils and limited resources, Lancaster had to devise radical methods to make ends meet. This is how the "monitorial" idea was born. It delegated to the students the responsibility for teaching and doing the paperwork. The better students taught the slower. When the slower developed, they became monitors. There was one teaching monitor for every ten students. There were other monitorial positions that involved many of the students and spread prestige and responsibilities around.

One monitor would assign new students to a class. Another would keep track of absences. When a student made progress, a monitor would promote him. Another made or molded pens. Another was in charge of distributing writing slates. A "monitor-general" was in charge of all the others.

This kind of student interaction—teaching and learning from their peers—eliminated boredom. Lancaster wrote: "A school, governed by such order, exhibits a scene of wonder to visitors, and happiness among the children, which baffles the power of description."

Under this system, there was little for the adult headmaster to do except organize, reward, punish and inspire. Lancaster's schools did not need a harsh master, for they were governed almost automatically. "The master should be a silent bystander because the system and not the master's vague or uncertain judgment will be in practice," Lancaster said. "In a common school, the authority of the master is personal and the rod is his scepter. His absence brings riot and confusion. In his absence his assistants will rarely be minded. Under my plan, the master leaves and business goes on as usual because the authority is not personal."

His method was unique, fast and effective. "I continually made experiments," Lancaster later recalled. "1,000 children could be taught in one schoolroom under the care of one master and a great proportion of them finish their education in 12 months. That education comprising the art of reading, writing and arithmetic." beyond the three R's, his schools also emphasized geometry, algebra, trigonometry, religion and languages.

In seeking to motivate his students, Lancaster had stumbled on to a method that brought out their entrepreneurial spirit and taught them how to deal with money. This was no small matter, since all this took place in the early stages of the industrial revolution. Most of the students and their parents had rarely dealt directly with cash.

Lancaster awarded "Merit Badges" for various accomplishments. These were small paper tickets, much like Green Stamps in contemporary America. Like trading stamps, the merit badges were worth little individually but had considerable value when redeemed in bulk. They could purchase toys, children's books, pens, purses and clothing.

Merit badges were also used to borrow books from a library monitor. This job was a "concession." It was a bonanza for that monitor. Other students often bid to purchase the concession with their accumulated merit badges. Through this process they learned about the dynamics of buying and selling in a real marketplace.

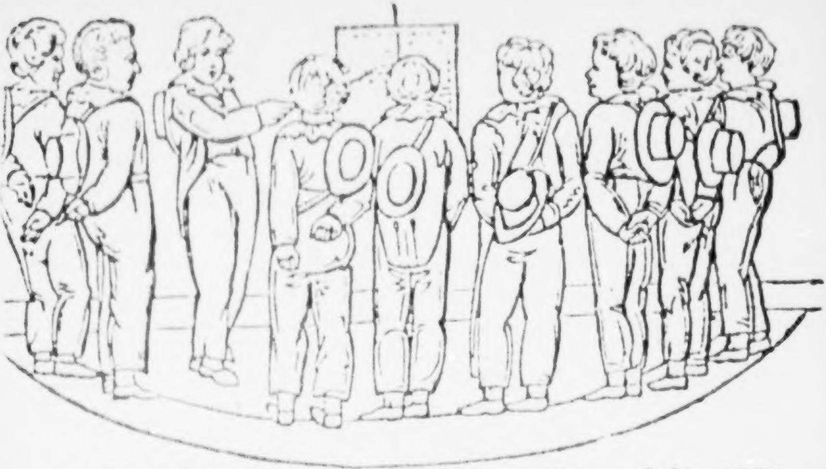
Entrepreneurial themes dominated Lancaster's ideas. Adult teachers in Lancaster schools had part of their income created by class attendance. Thus a teacher became a salesman and promoter of the system to bring in more pupils. Anyone who could pay the few shillings a year was welcome, including girls. No other system at that time had accepted them on an equal basis with boys.

Lancaster's cost-cutting experiments brought the cost of education down to a fraction of what it cost competing church or private schools. For instance, students wrote on slate instead of paper. Paper was expensive, slate indestructible. To save money on books, one per subject per class was used.

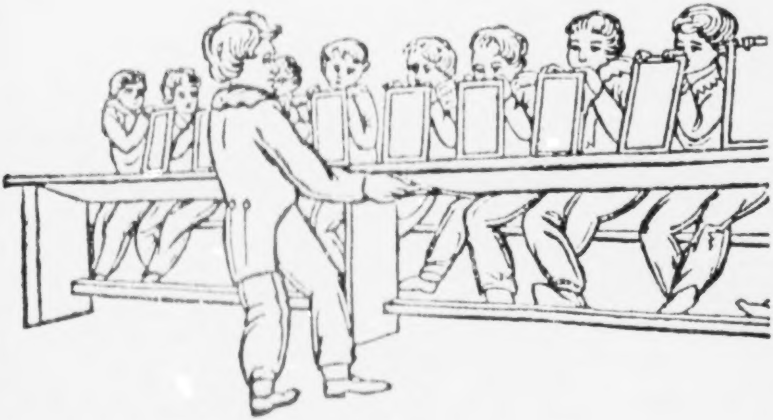
Each page was separated, placed on a stand, then the class was called together, divided into groups which stood before the stand and studied that one page as a lesson. The groups would then rotate so that each one had access to all the lessons.

Lancaster even designed prefabricated buildings that could be assembled in days. This was truly mass-produced education. Soon the system was self-sustaining by charging as little as four shillings a year.

Joseph Lancaster was a zealot, which was both a source of strength and weakness. He believed his system would revolutionize society by eradicating illiteracy, therefore ending poverty. To propagate his ideas, he wrote a book, "The Lancasterian System of Education," and printed several thousand copies. he lectured all over the world, giving away copies to anyone who professed an in-



Picture shows a monitor teaching a group of his peers. They stand in a semi-circle about him. One page of a textbook is placed on a stand before them. When the students have completed studying that page, they move to another semi-circle where they study another page.



Students showing their writing slates to a monitor. Slates were used because they were indestructible, while paper was expensive.

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terest in starting a school based on his plan.

During 1808 to 1810, in an era of slow carriages and slower boats, Lancaster made 16 missionary journeys, traveling 6,837 miles, delivering 141 lectures and establishing 95 schools for 25,000 children.

Lancaster was a great salesman but terrible at business. Although he earned huge lecture fees, he gave much of it away to sincere or not-so-sincere audience members who said they needed seed money to implement his plan. He also liked to live well, which was at odds with his pious Quaker background. Robert Dale Owen, the famed social reformer wrote that Lancaster was "a strange mixture of honest self-sacrificing zeal and imprudent self-indulgent ostentation." Later in his life this trait would come back to haunt him.

His major break toward national fame came when the aristocrat, Lord Somerville, attended a class and quickly became a backer in 1803. Somerville told others what he had seen and soon "foreign princes, ambassadors, peers, commoners, ladies of distinction, bishops and archbishops, Jews and Turks, all visited the schools with wonder-waiting eyes."

This ferment reached King George III, who granted an audience to Lancaster. "I have sent for you to give me an account of your system of education. You say one master teaches 500 children at the same time? How do you keep them in order, Lancaster?" the King asked. Lancaster described the monitorial system. The King was amazed. "I highly approve of your system, and it is my wish that every poor child in my dominions should be taught to read....I will do anything you wish to promote this object." King George promised 100 pounds annually, from his own funds, not the state's.

This modest patronage transformed a growing private business into a national institution. But in the end it proved fatal, since it aroused defenders of the Church of England to active opposition. To his critics, Lancaster was a dangerous radical intent on creating a social revolution. Teaching the "unwashed masses" to read and write and self-reliance made it possible for them to crack the traditional class barriers.

His most severe critic was the well-known writer, Sarah Trimmer. She warned that Lancaster's emphasis on merit, not class, might lead to the day when children "accustomed to consider themselves nobles of a school, may, in their future lives, from a conceit of their own trivial merits...aspire to be nobles of the

land, and to take the place of the hereditary nobility."
Lancaster's opponents soon turned to championing a rival educational method, the "Madras" system of a Scottish clergyman, Andrew Bell. This system, while it relied on monitors, taught neither self-reliance or entrepreneurship. Bell had discovered his variation of the monitorial idea while on duty as an army chaplain in colonial Madras, India. He was in charge of an orphanage of Untouchable children. No adult would dare to teach these social outcasts. Bell, out of necessity, taught them to teach themselves.

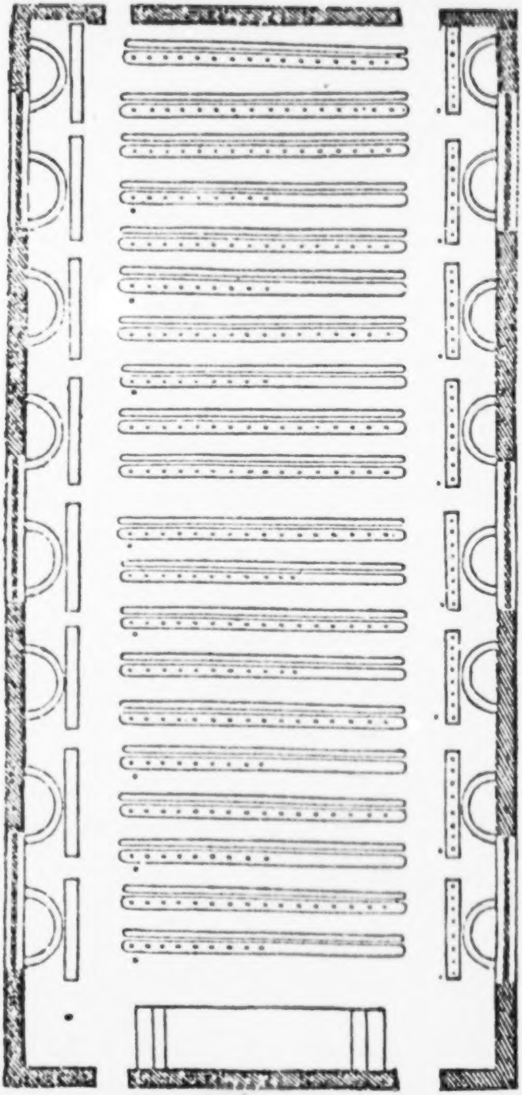
But Bell's method reinforced all the negatives of the class barriers. "In Utopian schemes for the universal diffusion of general knowledge," Bell said, "there is a risk of elevating those who are doomed to the drudgery of daily labor above their station, and rendering them unhappy and discontented in their lot.

The Church of England, in promoting the Madras system to eliminate Lancaster's schools, used the same tactics that many modern retailers or fast-food chains use against one another. Wherever Lancaster opened a school, the church opened one of its own directly across the street. Backed by huge construction funds from Parliament, the tactic succeeded. Gradually the Church of England split Lancaster's market and, step-by-step, pirated all his students.

In 1805 the Lancaster System reached the United States. Eventually there would be more monitorial schools here than in England. Yet, for enthusiasts of private schooling, the story of Lancaster's rise and fall in America is more depressing than its demise across the ocean. Particularly in New York State, government involvement via subsidies marred the system almost from the beginning.

In 1805 the prominent philanthropists, Thomas Eddy and John Murray formed "The Society for Establishing a Free School in the City of New York." Its purpose was to educate poor children who were ineligible for instruction by the various church-sponsored schools. Benjamin Perkins, the group's Secretary, knew Lancaster and had seen his operation in England, and recommended it. Within a year the Free School Society (FSS) was incorporated and the first classes were held in Manhattan, with monitors as teachers.

One of the Lancaster system's most powerful American friends was DeWitt Clinton. He was one of the most important political figures of the era, being a ten-time mayor of New York City and



Ground plan of a Lancaster school, demonstrating how 1,000 students could be taught in one room at one time. Each dot represents a student. Some are seated at the long benches at the center, writing. The rest are divided into small groups along the semi-circles, reciting.

and also the governor of the state.

Clinton was an early member of the Free School Society. Upon his request, the New York State legislature granted the FSS a $4,000 subsidy to construct a building and another $1,000 for expenses. The money came from a tiny liquor and tavern tax, so the general public was not yet affected.

By 1818, three schools, teaching thousands of New York's poor, were in operation. DeWitt Clinton was now Governor. State-funded construction of five more schools was planned, which called for a wider tax. This one was imposed on real estate.

That same year Joseph Lancaster was invited to New York and Washington D.C. The mayor and DeWitt Clinton officially received him. He was treated like royalty when he visited the U.S. House of Representatives, which created a resolution honoring Lancaster as a "friend of learning and of man."

Soon New York State moved from subsidizing the Free School Society to managing it by legislating a general education tax which gave it the revenue to build new schools and to admit children of all economic levels. by the 1840's 98 schools taught 25,000 pupils annually under the Lancaster plan.

Then came the coup-de-grace for the FSS as a private system. As a closed corporation subsidized by the state, it came under fire. John Spencer, the Secretary of New York State, charged that the FSS had "acquired control of the system of public education; and the taxpayers, who contribute to this fund, have no voice in the selection of those who administer the system."

Spencer quickly extended the state's authority by creating the now-famous Board of Education to control the FSS. By 1852 it was completely absorbed by this bureaucracy, the cost of schooling quadrupled, taxes rose dramatically and the quality of education declined as the government now had a monopoly on education. Joseph Lancaster's great private system was dead but before it expired, 700,000 students in New York City had been taught by monitors.

Fortunately for Lancaster, he did not live to see its end. After coming to America he settled with his fellow Quakers in Philadelphia, but rumors about his profligate lifestyle and huge debts followed him from England, so that the pious Quakers shunned him. He was forced to wander from city to city, then Canada, and South America, briefly staying with friends before drifting on.

In October 1838, while in New York City to give a lecture, Joseph Lancaster was run over by a horse-drawn beer wagon, just a block away from one of his schools. He died. He was fifty-nine years old.

Shortly before his death he bitterly wrote: "Politicians have purposely interfered in what was originally a work of pure benevolence; and though they could neither corrupt or command the fountain, they have contaminated the stream."

John Chodes is a free-lance writer who specializes in the subject of education. His articles on this subject have appeared in The New York Times, Reason, The Freeman, Chronicles *and many other publications as well as TV and radio editorial replies.*

WELCOME TO SCHOOL, PRISON, COMPOUND, WHATEVER

by Bill Kaul

From the* Santa Fe Reporter*, March 2, 1995, Santa Fe, New Mexico:

CAPITAL FLIGHT SONG: DON'T FENCE ME IN

by Anne Constable

At 7:20 am. a teen-age boy in a white T-shirt and blue jeans already is hanging out in the parking lot of Capital High School, behind a large clump of chamisa. Parents begin arriving to drop off their kids. The parking lot gradually is filling with the cars of students who drive themselves to school. A group of boys gathers around two pickup trucks parked in adjoining spaces in the aisle farthest from the school. One newly arrived group gets into a white sedan and drives off.

Shortly after 8 a.m., the bell rings. Nobody is in a hurry. Kids continue chatting with friends in the parking lot. Others lean from the second floor balcony, watching the scene below. At 9:10 am., after nearly two hours on campus, the boy in the white T-shirt—and some of his buddies who are sporting Harley Davidson T-shirts—slouch toward the school entrance.

At 9:30 am., girls in twos and threes begin to emerge from school, get into their cars and leave campus. Nobody stops them. There is no security guard in sight. A teacher walking down a hallway with a female student listens to her protests. "I'm so bored," the student says.

The parking lot, which was full earlier in the morning, has 20 empty spaces by 11 am. A red pickup with a double cab pulls in. Four young men slump in their seats listening to music on the radio and wait for a friend. It's lunchtime. Dozens of kids head for their cars. Six girls pile into a blue Buick; another five squeeze into a tan Jeep.

A steady stream of vehicles exits the lot and heads for Cerrillos Road. Eventually there are 145 empty spaces in the student parking lot. Many of them still are empty long after classes resume.

A typical high school scene? In some ways, yes. But at Capital High School (enrollment of 1,230), hundreds of students may be absent from one or more classes each day. (Officials say the exact total is not available, although this information is scanned into student records.) The number reported missing for the entire day is much lower. Last week it ranged from a low of 40 to a high of 210.

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"This is a 45-acre campus with 1,200 students," says Capital Principal Andrew Rendon. "The two security guards are responsible for the classrooms, restrooms and hallways. It's next to impossible to be sure everyone is in class."

Many aren't. The ditching problem at Capital is so severe that Rendon recently announced a crackdown. In the past there has been nothing to prevent students from leaving the campus at will. Now, two new gates have been installed. Beginning this week they will be locked, except at lunch and after school is dismissed. One is located across the outlet from the parking lot, another at the entrance. A security guard will be posted at the emergency exit to check the passes of students authorized to leave campus.

"On any given day, too many kids leave campus. The number is high, too high," Rendon admits. "We are hopeful that by using the gates, once they arrive, they will remain here." Rendon says he plans to compare attendance before and after the gates are operating. Ditching has long been a problem at Santa Fe High, where a new administration is trying to deal with it. But according to at least one school board official Capital till now has been in denial about the problem.

Sophomores Teresa and Julia (not their real names) question whether the new Capital gates will be effective. Teresa started cutting classes last year at Santa Fe High with her 18-year-old boyfriend. By April she had missed so much course work that she didn't bother attending the last month at school

Transferring to Capital didn't improve her school attendance. Her friends from Santa Fe High would drive over to pick her up for lunch. They stayed away the rest of the day. According to the school Teresa has been absent without an excuse 40 times since Jan. 1, a figure she doesn't dispute. "Ditching is so fun. It's an addiction," she says.

Earlier this month Teresa's parents were summoned to the school and warned that she would be suspended for the rest of the year if she continued to ditch. Teresa, who is taking a challenging course load that includes chemistry and algebra II, agreed to a contract stipulating that she would not be tardy, cut school or break other Capital rules.

"The past month I've been trying to get back into school," she says. "I can't afford to get dropped." Her friends at Santa Fe High, however, have quit altogether.

Julia, a pretty girl with long pale hair, was caught ditching recently. "I ditched a lot last year, too," she admits. "Students are not afraid of the authority figures at school. Nobody is taking this seriously."

Capital's policy on unexcused absences is strict—at least on paper.

The first time a student is absent from class, the teacher is supposed to call the parent. After the second absence, the parents are warned that another infraction can lead to a one-day suspension. Recently the school has offered community service (cleaning the grounds) as an option to suspension after a student has been caught ditching three times. The policy clearly has not been enforced in every case.

The computerized notification system that Capital (and Santa Fe High) uses to inform parents of unexcused absences is seriously flawed. It is set up to dial a telephone number for the student's parents. Trouble is, many of the numbers and addresses on file are fictitious—deliberately so. In some cases the computer doesn't reach parents or the message left on home answering machines is erased before they can listen to it.

One parent discovered her child had 13 unexcused absences last month when a school official called up to check on information from another student that the girl had withdrawn from school. The mother was never notified of the absences. Furthermore, she says, "No one I have talked to has gotten one of these phone calls."

"We will do what we can to inform parents of these absences," Rendon says. But, he adds, while some parents complain when they are not notified that their kids are ditching, others complain when they are.

"We get irate parents who are demanding that we stop calling them, that the calls are a nuisance," he says.

The announcement that Capital is installing gates was greeted by a similar mix of parental reaction. Some, according to Rendon, argued that the open campus at least gave their kids the option to attend classes in which they were interested. But, he declares, "At this point we are willing to do what is in the best interest of the children." Some of the kids ditch because, they say, school is boring. Others are lured into the practice by friends, often older boys. Sometimes kids ditch to use drugs, according to students interviewed, but more often they cruise the malls, hang out in fast-food restaurants or in the empty houses of working parents. Some ditch because they are tired out from partying the night before.

"I have friends who go to parks and sleep in their cars during the day," says one student.

Students who get used to ditching find it's tough returning to the school routine. While some say they actually enjoy their classes, one grounded ditcher said, "I don't want a better schedule, because now I'm so used to messing around."

End of Newspaper Article

...A teacher walking down a hallway with a female student listens to her protests. "I'm so bored, " the student says.

1. The Obvious.

When the students become bored, it is necessary to infuse them with a new sense of enthusiasm, not about their lives, no—enthusiasm for school, a willingness to sit in a seat in a classroom for hours and hours, to listen, to learn and learn and learn, forever and ever, school without end, amen. So, at Capital High School and institutions like it all across the USA and elsewhere, there is a problem: boredom. Well, not boredom exactly, but student maladjustment to boredom. It seems that when students express boredom by *avoiding* it, this is called "ditching" or "skipping school" or "truancy." Now, how can these students learn to be good punctual uncomplaining cogs in a corporate wheel when they can't learn the basic lesson of school: sit still, memorize, do tasks, and learn to enjoy—or at least accommodate boredom. Be physically present and do what you're told: that is the lesson. Complaining of boredom? Running away to find more exciting things to do? Unacceptable behavior! What can be done?

..."On any given day, too many kids leave campus. The number is too high," Rendon admits. "We're hopeful that by using the gates, once they arrive, they'll remain here."

2. The Solution.

Fence 'em in! Gad, it's blindingly simple! If the students don't want to be in school, build a fence and see to it that they stay in school. If mental barriers to freedom don't work, then physical ones are the next thing to try. It's as old as the saying "get 'em by the gonads and their hearts and minds will follow." See, once they are locked up in school, their cars effectively impounded and unavailable as a means of escape, *then* real learning can take place. Of course, the teachers—poor fools!—will think they are teaching "subject matter," and will cluck sympathetically as students walk with them complaining of boredom, but *really* the teachers will be imparting the most important lesson of all: *learn to enjoy boredom. When you go out into the* real *world, you'll have to adjust to a boring job, boring routine, boring life. So get it now. Avoid trouble later.*

What we don't want, of course, are crowds of young people following their bliss, doing what they enjoy, what they are good at. Much better they should be drunk and wandering the streets to avoid "reality." Of course, with a gate to prevent automotive getaways, people might yet *walk off* campus. And also, we must remember, the gates are not necessary to keep all students in the school; it is only when the numbers of escapees becomes "too high" (according to Principal Rendon's figures): many students (the "model prisoners") never attempt escape. *They* already know the lesson that others are hopelessly putting off. You can't escape reality. There is no escape from America, from "making a living," from "being a productive citizen." These escapees are learning valuable lessons, however—lessons of escape and trickery that will serve them well in other institutions of learning: prison, hospital, etc.

...Students are not afraid of authority figures at this school.

3. But what of escapees?

Hey, if there's no fear of authority, how effective can gates and bars and bells and guards be? There will yet be escapees. People will walk off campus. (Not a leisurely stroll, but a USMC, close-to-the-ground-duck-behind-natural-cover escape.) People will meet up with getaway vehicles after leaving on foot, or crawling through land mines and barbed wire, or whatever. What can be done about that? Fences? Land mines, etc.? Well, maybe—and maybe even a little grant money could be found to finance it in this era of prison-building. Maybe the same industries that will eventually hire these drones and workers could come up with a little cash to help insure a compliant and uncomplaining work force. Or maybe it would be easier to simply to create a new institution altogether:

The Prison-school-factory.

Yes, a combination of prison and school, it would offer the ideal alternative to duplicating three institutions in our society: a school, prison, and job all in one! I mean, why build a prison with gates and bars to keep people in, when the people who will be in prison will be these same school-skippers in a few years anyway? Go ahead and put 'em in prison and teach 'em there! Teach 'em what? Verrrry simple: teach them to work in the industry that is included in the package. No more troubles about find jobs for dropouts and ex-cons: they can't drop out and they are never "ex" anything. They stay in this institution for their entire lives. Bored? No, they won't be bored—just supply plenty of drugs, TV, and gratuitous sex, and they'll be happy. I mean, after all, nobody ever said life has to have any *meaning*

...Students who get used to ditching find it's tough returning to the school routine.

4. Routines.

Routines are after all the heart of the system. Break the routine and the system shudders and cracks, the cogs in it come under extreme pressure and begin to overheat. Not that I'm suggesting that anyone break routines, god forbid—no, my suggestion is as above: the prison-school-factory. Why, heck, if a whole bunch of humans started wandering around—or quietly sitting, as is their wont—and seeking their bliss, their purpose in life, industry would grind to a halt. Civilization would crumble. The economy would collapse. Japan and China would take over the number one spot. And no one in his or her right mind would ever suggest *that* would be a good thing. Would they?

Bill Kaul lives, works and thinks his heretical thoughts at PO Box 698, Water Flow, NM 87421. He gave us two for the last issue. Are you as glad as I am that he writes these things down? Yay, Bill!

Here's another "grown-up kid" whose creative powers of observation are alive and well!

METAPHORS WITHIN METAPHORS

by Chris Mercogliano

I

Once,
In 1974
my shrink
told me I was
too metaphorical.
Why didn't he tell me
to write poetry instead?

I'm gradually finding some peace in the conclusion that life is just plain metaphorical—or at least mine undoubtedly is. These days, a "New Age" paradigm known as *The Gaia Hypothesis* views the entire planet Earth as a living metaphor of sorts; which leads to my idea that each of us is then free to create, more or less, our own life-metaphors within that grand context, limited ultimately by our own imagination. Of course, practically speaking, we are all shaped by myriad influences such as inherited traits, parental and societal molding, and the political and demographic realities which have a great deal to do with which roads are taken and which are not, to borrow Robert Frost's metaphor from his famous poem. And so, what real value can what we call education (from the Latin word *educare*, meaning to lead out) have if it is anything less than a process whereby we each arrive at the fullest expression of ourselves for the limited time that we have on this good earth?

An episode from Rod Serling's insightful and often chilling classic television series, The Twilight Zone, suddenly comes to mind. The setting was an apparent museum filled with a large number of extremely life-like dioramas featuring people engaged in all sorts of endeavors: astronauts in space, old men fly fishing on perfect mountain streams, elegant dinner parties, families at the beach, and so on. As I remember, a couple of older gentlemen had taken this particular week's "wrong turn through the twilight zone," and found themselves in the very unusual museum where they eventually met up with a mysterious old curator; who after showing them around, asked each of them their ideal fantasy of what they wanted "life" to be like after they died. I forget exactly how it went—I was about seven when I saw the show—but one guy decided he wanted to spend eternity exploring space and the other fishing or something like that. As the curtain falls, the viewers learn that there are now two brand new exhibits in the big museum, each with a single old man happily indulging in his dream pursuit!

Life as Metaphor:

It appears more and more to me as I get older that life before death is a lot like Serling's macabre museum, without the still-popular eerie music which introduced each episode. Don't our lives end up following the scripts that we—with plenty of help from our friends—have written for ourselves? While the never-ending debates over human dilemma/questions like "nature vs. nurture" and "free will vs. determinism" rage on, I have decided to throw in my lot with the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois or Six Nations) people of upstate New York, who have managed to hang onto small corners of their ancestral lands and thereby preserve a majority of their cultural traditions. They simply choose to refer to the idea of God, or Creator, or the Universe as, "The Great Mystery," and leave it at that. It saves a lot of arguing, without suppressing any of the wondering, which is why I like the notion so much. Besides, it has worked very well for them for over thirty thousand years; so it seems to me there must be something to it. Joseph Campbell, the late mythologist who nearly spent his entire life studying and unraveling the underlying meanings and commonalties of the mythologies of a great many of the world's cultures, once said, "God is a metaphor for a mystery that absolutely transcends all human categories of thought." On another occasion he defined mythology as "an organization of symbolic images and narratives metaphorical of the possibilities and fulfillment in a given culture in a given time. Mythology is a metaphor. God, angels, purgatory—these are metaphors."

Giving Children the Space to Invent their own Metaphors:

The intent at The Free School is to allow each child ample time and space to invent, tear down, and experiment with metaphors of their own making. Often this can be quite trying to the surrounding adults who are "holding the container" for them, to borrow a recently coined phrase from Michael Meade, a brilliant modern storyteller/philosopher and spokesman for the current "men's movement." My wishes regarding students' plans of action (or lack thereof) and their own ideas don't always intersect all that well. It's a dance every day. In the end, I would say I practice non-interference more often than not, falling back during troubling moments on my ultimate faith that kids generally know themselves and their true needs better than I do. After a child has been in our school long enough for me to get to know him or her pretty well, I try to begin practicing a "technique" I once learned from nationally-known Oneida Nation author and teacher Paula Underwood Spencer. She calls it "new eyes," which simply means that every day teachers should try to look at their students as though seeing them for the first time.

It can be so tempting and so easy to stereotype kids and put them into categories which govern how we relate to them, with the real trouble beginning when they behave in such a way as to feed us back our fantasies of them. The now classic and oft-referred to study where the performance records of the "smart" and the "dumb" incoming fourth grade classes of a public school get switched without the two teachers knowing is relevant here. After a month or so into the new year, someone tested the two groups and presto-chango, the dumb kids were suddenly smart and the smart kids suddenly dumb! Practicing "new eyes" is not nearly so easy as it sounds. But, if one begins to look at life as essentially metaphorical and at education as the fulfillment of possibilities; then one can readily see how the impact on children, when adults fixate and stifle them with pre-determined notions about who they are, goes far deeper than the scores on standardized achievement tests. This sobering realization always reminds me to exercise my "new eyes" as often as possible.

How Does a "Real School" Look?:

It is not uncommon for a new visitor at our school to look a bit bewildered. Though certain of the right props are in place: some well-worn desks scrounged long ago from a closing public school, real chalkboards (a recent donation), a long wall of textbooks (all public school cast-offs), a hybrid collection of mostly donated personal computers, etc. etc., the confused guest's unexpressed question in its simplest terms is usually something like, "Is this a real school?" Now this is a very good question, which leads me to ponder, "What is a real school?" Hmmm... I think we're back to metaphors again. In ancient Greece where people still co-existed with their deities, "school"—or in Greek, "skolh"—was a locus for the life-long practice and attainment of human perfection, where body and spirit received every bit as much attention as the mind. (At least this was more likely to be the case in classical Athens, as opposed to the rival and militaristic city-state of Sparta, which had a much different agenda.)

"School," then, as it is here today, has essentially been a microcosm of the prevailing cosmology; or, if you will, a metaphor. In pre-Columbian America, life was school and school was life. The transmission of knowledge and tradition was woven directly into the fabric of the culture, where the belief in the oneness of creation was an everyday, living reality. These are oversimplified, romantic notions, to be sure; but then, that's one of the attractions for me of working in metaphor. Today's homeschooling families, it seems to me, are in many ways living out an updated version of the early European-American ethic of well-educated independence and self-reliance. (Prior to the advent of compulsory schooling in Massachusetts, the literacy rate there was 95%, a figure that dropped measurably once kids were forced into classrooms.) Recently at a national alternative education conference, I met a mother now teaching her three children at home who summed up this viewpoint very succinctly: "The schools were trying to take my kids over; but they're MY kids, NOT the school's."

School as Factory:

Recent critics of American compulsory education like John Taylor Gatto have been feverishly exposing the roots of that institution's "family tree." There isn't much Romanticism to be found in the writings of the founders of our modern system of public education, who were most up front about the premises of their design. Urgently needed, they wrote, was an institution for feeding the hungry fires of the burgeoning Industrial Revolution and for rapidly Americanizing the masses of immigrants who would provide the fuel. Today, Gatto calls it "government-monopoly, factory education," and with good reason. Way back in the sixties, Marxist and "New Left" critics were decrying the now unspoken economic motives of our schools. According to this radical view, schools are training centers whose only purpose is to prepare children "for the workforce," where students are taught to be on time, to start and stop at the sound of a bell, to work on tasks that often have no inherent meaning—with the motivation coming in the form of a carrot of some kind attached to the end of a long stick—and to accept being stratified into different status groups. In other words, the metaphor is one of a factory within a factory.

The Need for a New Model or Metaphor:

Now, among others, post-modern educational thinkers like social philosopher Ivan Illich and Dan Greenberg, founder of the Sudbury Valley School in eastern Massachusetts, which is rapidly becoming a model for a number of other genuinely democratic schools around the nation, are suggesting that the factory model is already an anachronism and that a new post-industrial metaphor taking into account developments like the "communications revolution" and the "global economy" is being called for. Neither man can quite spell out how to get there from here; but both have compelling arguments for this being where we need to go. Actually, Greenberg would claim that his school, where a child's individual will and imagination are fully recognized, is already a working example of an educational environment based on human creativity that a post-industrial world will need in order to flourish.

When I take a step back from our school, one image I see is that of a complex molecule with a lot of free radicals (pun intended) dancing around a very active nucleus. This molecule is always in motion, and there is a great deal of exchange between it and its surroundings, because the outer membrane is quite permeable. To spell out this metaphor of mine, the molecule is the Free School in its entirety; the free radicals are the children, of course; and the nucleus is comprised of the various teachers—full-time, part-time, or volunteer. In our school, as is the case with Greenberg's Sudbury Valley, the teachers usually wait for the students to come to them for ideas, assistance and resources rather than the reverse, which is generally the pattern of most conventional schools where adults structure the content, rhythm, rules, etc., etc. We find that our recent public school transfers are often at a loss for a time; but then their self-motivation begins to grow by leaps and bounds as they watch "veteran" students joyfully propelling themselves through each school day, guided by their own moods, interests and initiative.

How Teachers Can Really Teach:

Meanwhile, an observer would be likely to find teachers who have not been sought out for one reason or another engaged in their own favorite activities, undertaken for their own satisfaction. When not busy teaching, weavers weave, artists sketch, writers write, clothing-designers sew, wood-workers saw and hammer, potters pot; and then kids who are drawn to that particular endeavor gather round to watch, and often, to join in and learn. It's much more like the pre-industrial village model, where children learned by being directly involved with the adult life of the community. The prolonged adolescence currently in vogue in our country is a twentieth century, "first world" invention, and something we work very hard at undoing. During a given week, one will find any number of talented volunteers in our school "sharing their thing" with interested children. We also have a very active apprenticeship program which places kids out in the city to work closely with adults who are practicing a skill or a trade that they want to investigate for themselves, and we generally find that professionals who are finding true satisfaction in their work are more than happy to oblige.

In addition to metaphor and mythology, Joseph Campbell spoke of the necessity of "following your bliss," unless you wanted to wake up one day late in life and sadly discover that "your ladder had been up against the wrong wall" all that time. Free School teachers try to resist the ever-present urge to race children through a series of academic hoops so that they can feel like successful teachers and at the same time quiet parents' fears as well that their kids aren't learning enough of the things they should be learning. We recognize the simple truth that no one else can find your bliss for you, and that this process of self-discovery requires a supportive environment where there is both plenty of time and the relative absence of fear, which I will say more about in another place. Again and again we are taught by our students that finding their bliss can have far-reaching effects.

Kids Can Make Amazing Turn-arounds:

Since our school has been a "school of last resort" for many children over the years, I have witnessed countless kids begin to make complete turn-arounds once they discovered that one thing they could throw themselves into with abandon. I can readily think of dozens of examples, but Arthur comes to mind as a particularly striking and recent one. He had come to us at the late age of eleven, having previously been thrown out of several Albany public schools—his last stop being a special classroom where he was medicated with ritalin, a standard drug treatment for "hyperactive" children. My distaste for that label notwithstanding, I must say that Arthur was about as active a boy as I had ever encountered. He literally could not sit still, and his attention span—even when he was doing precisely what he wanted to be doing—was pitifully short. It was not hard to imagine why no previous classroom could contain him. As with all of the others who had preceded him, we gave Arthur the free run of the school; and like the others, his favorite sport, initially, was to generate excitement by trying to disrupt any and everything going on around him. And then he fell in love with Oscar and with drawing; I'm not sure which came first.

Oscar was a small, introverted boy who was already an accomplished artist, often spending the entire day doing nothing but creating powerful action heroes and dragons and castles on his well-worn sketch pad. At first, Arthur could spend about five or ten minutes drawing before he had to run around and let off some steam. Then, ten minutes stretched to twenty; and before long, he was sitting head to head with his "teacher" for an entire morning without getting up, sometimes choosing to work right through a most delicious, hot Free School lunch. The disruptions mostly stopped, and Arthur started showing interest in other activities, too. All was well until he formed an impossible and sometimes hostile alliance with another domineering and aggressive public school "reject" who had come to us the previous year. Adolescence was beginning to rear its sometimes ugly head and the two boys became increasingly disrespectful and sometimes downright abusive towards their female peers and teachers as well, rejecting all efforts to stop their unacceptable behavior. I was at my wit's end and finally convinced the other boy's mother to try him back in public school again before he regressed into the state he was in when he came to us. My hope was that Arthur would come off it if he were separated from his cohort. It was a nice try; but as it turned out, Arthur decided he wanted to follow his buddy to the same public school; and although I did not think he had been with us long enough to "complete the cure" (it had only been four months), he continued to escalate his awfulness until we were only too glad to help him on his way. Much to my amazement, Arthur went back into a regular classroom at his normal grade level—without drugs—and has been doing very well there ever since. He returns to visit us often.

I am quite certain that it was the development of his love for drawing and for his quiet teacher who was half-a-head shorter, that had enabled Arthur to return so successfully to the very place where his history of "failure" had begun. The carry-over from the drawing to other areas was nothing short of miraculous; though again, I have observed the same healing progression taking place countless times in our little school year in and year out. The knowledge that the public schools, in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases, take the chemical shortcut of administering body-, mind- and soul-deadening drugs to render children "manageable" absolutely sickens me. The human damage done is often permanent, and is, as Arthur so quickly taught us, utterly unnecessary.

Looking back, I wonder if *what* Arthur and Oscar were drawing didn't also have something to do with the remarkable and rapid transformation which had taken place. Perhaps working and reworking those same mythical scenes and action figures had the effect of creating some sort of inner repatterning; and perhaps they were inventing just the personal metaphors needed to fill in gaps left in their developing psyches by factors like absent fathers, dysfunctional families and a corrosive popular culture. Much has been said and written about the psychic damage now being done to our children by television and other post-modern media, and I find every bit of it to be all too true. Kids today are totally weighted down, frustrated and often corrupted by the violence, narcissism, and pornographic blend of sexuality and naked aggression that is often such a hefty part of their daily sensory diet at home. At the Free School, we continue to place great value on helping kids find as many alternatives as possible to the stinking garbage being served up by our hyperstimulated society.

Play-acting as a Metaphor:

Nowhere is the experimentation with metaphor more obvious than when children are play-acting and dressing up, and we have an entire room in the school devoted primarily to this purpose. There are two large trunks filled with costumes and accessories of every imaginable kind, including a set of exotic, lacy gowns donated to us by a bridal shop which was going out of business; and of course there is a large mirror on the wall for carefully studying "the look." Inevitably, the costuming inspires the co-creation of some drama or fantasy of one kind or another, and the variety is literally endless. The kids generally do this entirely on their own and often for hours at a time. Only occasionally does a finished product emerge; which then usually gets staged before the school's best guaranteed audience—the pre-schoolers—who love nothing more than a spontaneous live production and who are most uncritical!

Only occasionally, when the time and the kids feel just right, will I join in and work with a group of aspiring young actors on a more elaborate production. If I reach back quite a few years to a time when we were less confident in our unorthodox approach to education, I can recall a particularly wild bunch of seven-, eight- and nine-year-olds who were under my charge, several of whom were just coming off unhappy public school experiences. These kids seemed incapable of getting along with each other and mightily resisted my efforts to help ease them into the flow of the school. Finally, in near desperation, I decided to give up everything else I was trying to do and just read aloud to any of them who wanted to listen. I selected a juicy and exciting children's classic, George MacDonald's, *The Princess and Curdie*, a turn-of-the-century English romance full of intrigue and magical beings, and with both a girl and a boy protagonist about the group's age. When about half of them began wandering in and out of the room over the course of the first few chapters, I grew a bit doubtful of my choice of novels, which was written in a language and style quite foreign to the kids. My fears were quickly laid to rest when I realized that the student most tuned into the story was Franz, the boy who had been giving me—and everyone else—the hardest time. Somewhat "dyslexic," and still struggling with reading on a first grade level at age nine, Franz was hanging onto every word. His ability to understand the difficult syntax and to follow MacDonald's long descriptive passages was extraordinary, and his enthusiasm was quite contagious. Before long, all eight children were glued to their seats, insisting that I read to them for the entire morning!

As the story drew to a dramatic and happy ending, I was deluged with a chorus of pleas to let them act it out. Still a bit shell-shocked by this crew, I decided to play hard to get. I told them that the story was too complex, and besides, it was a novel and not a play. They responded by saying that I was all wrong and that they would create the dialogue and ask the art teacher to help them make props, scenery and costumes. Before I quite realized what was happening, they had organized themselves into a cast and I was appointed director and told please to write everything down. Here was a miracle in progress and it was my turn to get into the flow! A group of cantankerous kids who previously couldn't even cross the street together without battling for position had just sorted out their roles for the play—with some of them playing three or four parts—with hardly a single argument.

When things quieted down and I had a chance to reflect on just what was taking place, I began to notice that the children each had chosen precisely the right roles for themselves. For instance, Franz, who was not well-liked because of his constant teasing and bugging to get attention, was the unanimous choice to play the leading role of Curdie, who undergoes an important maturational transformation during the course of the tale. When work on the play began, Franz was still fighting learning to write his last name; and here the class was clamoring for an all-out adaptation of a very long and complicated story with Franz responsible for a majority of the lines, including numerous long speeches taken verbatim from the novel. Furthermore, the kids decided they wanted to invite parents, grandparents, friends and neighbors to a gala evening performance of their production, thereby increasing the pressure on themselves (and me) by at least a hundredfold. Franz, to whom the idea of reading or any kind of "schoolwork" had been anathema, went home and studied his lines every night. At one point he was having terrible trouble memorizing one particularly long and difficult speech, so I suggested that we rewrite it in his own words so that it would be easier to remember. He came in the next day able to recite the original word for word!

Then there was Alicia, another struggling new student who was always on the fringe and either choosing to be alone or to play with much younger children whom she could easily dominate. She was also a reluctant reader who generally came to school looking like an unmade bed. So, of course, she was selected to play the female lead, which was a complex dual role of an ancient and mystical grandmother-queen and the beautiful young princess who was the alter ego of the old queen. She demonstrated amazing inner flexibility and control as she alternated between the two parts; and she, too, was absolutely determined to overcome her reading "handicap" and learn every one of her numerous lines. Also, she began coming to school each day, much to the delight of her exasperated mother, I'm sure, with her hair beautifully brushed and parted.

Little Mark, passive, painfully shy and quiet as a churchmouse, elected to play the role of the evil Lord Chamberlain who betrays Curdie at one point. Before long he was astounding everyone as he really hammed up his part and shouted out his lines to an imaginary back row. Bryn, a diminutive, blond-haired and blue-eyed "good little girl," typecast by the others as the young princess in the play, began to rebel and to assert her own wishes. She refused to sit back and watch the climactic final battle as MacDonald had written, and instead insisted on slashing away with her dagger right alongside the boy-warriors. She also didn't want to marry Curdie in the end, either, and so we changed that, too!

In the course of developing the play, all of the kids seemed to be going through with an inner process that was exactly right for them. They each had chosen precisely the metaphors which corresponded with where they sensed themselves to be in their lives at that time. It was quite uncanny, really. There is a branch of modern psychotherapy called Psychosynthesis which works with all of the various "sub-personalities" that each of us consists of. Therapeutic change is achieved by experiencing and acting out these interior characters out with conscious awareness so that the individual becomes more of an integrated team and can then live more harmoniously and get more of what he or she wants out of life.

As the kids readied their play for the stage, I could see each of them busily exploring any number of their "sub-personalities." Philip, a talented and creative boy who was prone to violent outbursts, chose to play both the roles of the wise king and the traitorous butler who is part of the plot to poison him. In the end, the king manages to harness his rage at being betrayed by those so close to him, and to drive the evil forces from the kingdom. James, on the other hand, who ordinarily kept his anger and aggression tightly under wraps, got into the role as the devious royal physician so much that the audience would hiss loudly every time he appeared on the stage—especially when he attempted to stab the king. Michael was a one-of-a-kind, oddball sort of kid. I suspect that he didn't like himself very much, and he reveled in acting weird to win attention. In the play, he cleverly improvised one of the strange, magical monster-creatures that help Curdie defeat the enemy. Creating that role, which he pulled off with aplomb, seemed to be his way of getting at his wounded self-image; and I loved the way in which he turned what might have been considered a weakness in his character into a real strength. Then there was big Tom, a physically powerful and athletic boy who often shied away from any non-physical challenge. He played Lina, Curdie's wolf-like guardian that becomes a centrally heroic figure as the story develops. Though it was a non-speaking role, Tom received one of the loudest ovations at the end. Finally, there was Tyrone, with a hot-tempered father and angry at living in the shadow of an idolized older brother, choosing to play the role of Peter, Curdie's kind and reasonable father. In the play, he arrives in the nick of time to rescue Curdie, having made an entrance so total that it practically carried him into the audience where his big brother sat watching proudly!

It was a magnificent performance, played to a standing-room-only crowd in a makeshift theater in the upstairs of our school. Ovation after ovation provided the kids with well-deserved acknowledgment for their months of dedicated work. It had not been easy, and they had challenged themselves in every imaginable respect. Though there was no shortage of ruffled feathers along the way, especially as the tension of performing before a live audience mounted, they absolutely amazed me with their willingness and ability to cooperate with one another. Reflecting back on it now, I can see what an invaluable experience this was for everyone, containing so much learning and healing on so many different levels.

A post-script to the story involves Franz. A few weeks after the performance he wrote a wonderful poem which he planned to read at an annual event held by the local social justice "community" called Readings Against the End of the World. Then, at the last minute, Franz began to get cold feet, fearing that he would be unable to read his beautiful work in front of a group of mostly strangers. I sat down with him and reminded him of his splendid accomplishments in *The Princess and Curdie*. Reassured by that memory, he reconsidered and went on to read his poem without a hitch!

Children's Poetry:

It goes without saying that poetry is another region where children can mine their own mother-lode of personal metaphors. We have found over the years at the Free School that children will spontaneously come out with the most amazing poems and short stories when writing isn't turned into a measured academic exercise. As was the case with *The Princess and Curdie*, the images that kids elect to write about tell us a great deal about where they are in their developmental process, and most important of all, in their own idiom. Especially when they aren't forced to write; and when spelling and grammar take a far-back seat to mood, feeling and content, young writers work almost reflexively in metaphor because their identification with animals, colors, sounds, etc. is so natural and so complete. A couple of years ago a bunch of our kids entered a city-wide poetry contest sponsored by the public library. Although we had by far the fewest entrants because our school is so small, we ended up with the majority of the winners, the public and parochial schools being the main "competition." The results were extraordinary.

As I think Joseph Campbell would readily agree, children themselves are metaphors within metaphors, and their healthy growth demands a recognition of this vital dimension of human existence. At least part of the blame for the mayhem and destruction found among our youth today—especially our urban young people—should be laid at the door of our mechanistic, materialistic mass-culture, and particular at the thresholds of our schools which so effectively hammer home its values. Part of the solution, I now know, lies in helping children to discover that they have the power, with a generous measure of help and collaboration, to create a world worth living in.

Now, having begun this chapter with a poem, it seems only fitting to end with one. Written years ago by a former student named Jesse—a boy of six who also lived with my wife and me for a time—this poem has been growing yellow and wrinkled while to our bedroom wall. Pretty much abandoned by his Ethiopian father and one of three children of a young welfare mother of southern Italian descent who was struggling with alcohol addiction, Jesse had not been having an easy time of it. At one point, he even lost most of his hair due to stress-related alopecia (it has since grown back and he is now a handsome and happy, very normal teenager). The poem speaks for itself, I think:

ALL OF A SUDDEN I TURNED INTO A RAINBOW

I am all different colors.
When I come out, the people look at me.
They say I look pretty.
I am magical.
I come out every morning
And people see me get happy.

Sometimes I get feeling discouraged, disillusioned, even, about our chances of ever creating a society fit for human beings, fit for all life—and then I think about folks like John Gatto, Bill Kaul, Chris Mercogliano, kids everywhere who've had a chance to be themselves—and remember all over again that the creative imagination, the part of us that remembers the mythological nature of life, is still alive and active—and I let myself breathe freely again. Thanks, God. And thanks for Sudbury Valley, Summerhill, the Free School!

Speaking of which, Sudbury Valley Press has come out with a gorgeous new book which I urge you to get and enjoy! A review follows:

REVIEW:

Kingdom of Childhood
edited by Mimsy Sadofsky and Daniel Greenberg
from Interviews by Hanna Greenberg,
Sudbury Valley School Press, Framingham, Mass., 1994.
Reviewed by Mary Leue

As a devoted follower of Sudbury Valley School and all its denizens and works for lo! these many years, I have never failed to be impressed—and often been moved—by the writings coming from the folks there via Sudbury Valley School Press. This latest offering, however, is something on an entirely different order from all their previous books—at least, for me. They've been gradually working up to a pitch of quality publishing of which I am frankly in awe, but until now I have felt as though I had had to sit through the sermon before I could have communion, which is what I wait for! Well, this one is pure communion, or perhaps the wine and bread of Shabbat which constituted the first communion. Or maybe just dessert after the hamburgers and broccoli.

I am waxing a bit too lyrical, perhaps, you may well think—and of course you'd be right—but this book means a great deal to me and is the one I've been waiting for for years from SVS. Yes, all Sudbury Valley's books are both relevant and valuable, but they address audiences that are primarily motivated by logic and information. Hey—that has to be done! But I've personally been moving more and more toward a kind of grass-roots vocabulary that can be assimilated easily by both educated and uneducated people. Perhaps this is an indirect protest against the terminally *bourgeois formalism of the educated middle class—but whatever it* is, I always look for a kind of umbilical resonance in the stuff I read concerning education.

In Dan's book *Free at Last*, published in 1992, he had a whole section devoted to describing the daily life of his beloved school, and I was able to oooh and aah over that. So what's in *K of C* is not entirely new material for SVS. But this one doesn't just give it to us as dessert, or whatever. This is a whole book based on stories offered by former school kids who are telling us from their hearts exactly what they did at SVS, what they loved, what they learned, who they learned from and why, how they finally managed to separate themselves, and how that was for them, and what it has meant in their lives ever since. To me, that is the bottom line for any school! The Community School in Camden, Maine, now has a book out based on interviews with former students called *Changing Lives* (See the review in the summer '94 issue of *ΣΚΟΛΕ.*)

What comes out very clearly is the quality of the writing throughout this book—or speaking, since the book is based on interviews with Hanna Greenberg. What this quality means to me is far from being simple. I experience it as an outcome of a whole congeries of factors—the most significant, because it was the catalyst, being Hanna herself, whose personal quality of interacting with these alumnae and alumni of the school illuminates the entire book. And of course that's not simple, either. I've only met Hanna once, but her article entitled "The Art of Doing Nothing" (reprinted in *Challenging the Giant*, volume I, p. 309) reflects brilliantly her unique style of teaching, which also encompasses her openness to learning from her kids. This book, which omits her questions to which the answers are addressed (unfortunately), still. to me, reflects her personal style as well as that of each of the kids she is interviewing.

But of course, the meat of this splendid book is the thirty-one narratives by the thirty-one ex-students of Sudbury Valley. And they are very readable indeed, very factual, very simply told, and, in sum, a real visit to the school. The many candid illustrations, some in color, enhance this sense of immediacy. Reading these stories is like watching the kids themselves as they live the day-to-day lives of their growing-up years. Their recollections are uniformly vivid and authentic, convincing to the reader of the accuracy and truthfulness of each account. This fact, to me, is in itself a testimonial to the impact of these kids on the school; the school on them. Clearly, the school is the kids—and all the other people at the school! It is only when you look at other schools that you realize with stunning clarity what a statement that is! How many schools—how many places—do you know about of which you could make such a statement? Well, Summerhill, of course. Jerry Mintz's Shaker Mountain, now gone, alas. And ours—The Free School—of course. (And yes, I may sound biased here. But I'm actually not.) And I'm sure there are others!

I think the Foreword gives an overall idea of how SVS, the frame around this living picture, works, in a good summary form, so I am reproducing it below:

FOREWORD: THE KINGDOM OF CHILDHOOD

Sudbury Valley School is a place where people decide for themselves how to spend their days. Students of all ages determine what they will do, as well as when, how, and where they will do it. This freedom is at the heart of the school; it belongs to the students as their right, not to be violated.

The fundamental premises of the school are simple: that all people are curious by nature; that the most efficient, longlasting, and profound learning takes place when started and pursued by the learner; that all people are creative if they are allowed to develop their unique talents; that age-mixing among students promotes growth in all members of the group; and that freedom is essential to the development of personal responsibility.

In practice this means that students initiate all their own activities and create their own environments. The physical plant, the staff, and the equipment are there for the students to use as the need arises. The school provides a setting in which students are independent, are trusted, and are treated as responsible people.

Sudbury Valley School was founded in 1968. It is located on a ten acre campus adjoining extensive conservation lands. A millpond offers opportunities for fishing and ice skating. The old stone mansion and barn are furnished, for the most part, like a home. The atmosphere at school is relaxed and informal.

Whatever the time of day, and whatever their age, students in the school are all doing what they want to do. Usually that means that they are doing things not done in most other schools, and doing them with a very unusual intensity and concentration. Most often students are unconscious that "learning" is taking place. Doing what they choose to do is the common theme; learning is the by-product.

The school teems with activity. Adults and students mix freely. People can be seen talking, reading, and playing. They may be in the photolab developing or printing pictures. They may be in a karate class or just playing on mats in the dance room. Someone may be building a bookshelf in the woodworking shop, or fashioning chain mail armor and discussing medieval history. There are almost always people making music of one kind or another, and others listening to music. You might find someone studying French, or Latin, or algebra. It would be most unusual if there were not people playing a computer game somewhere, or chess; a few people doing some of the school's administrative work in the office; some people engaged in role-playing games; others perhaps rehearsing a play. People will be trading stickers and trading lunches. A group may be selling pizza that they made to raise money for an activity—perhaps they need to buy a new kiln, or want to go on a trip. In the art room, people will be drawing; they might also be sewing, or painting, or working with clay, either on the wheel or by hand.

Always there are people playing happily and busily, indoors and outdoors, in all seasons and all weather. Always there are groups talking, and always there are individuals quietly reading here and there.

One of the things most adults notice first about Sudbury Valley is the ease of communication. People, no matter what their age, treat each other with easy respect. There is a comfortable air of self-confidence, the confidence normal to individuals pursuing the goals they set themselves. Things are almost never quiet, and there is an exhausting intensity, but the activity is not chaotic or frenetic.

The students at Sudbury Valley are doing what they want, but they are not necessarily choosing what comes easily. A closer look reveals that they are challenging themselves; that they are acutely aware of their own weaknesses and strengths, and likely to be working hardest on their weaknesses. Along with the ebullient good spirits, there is an underlying seriousness—even the six-year-olds know that they, and only they, are responsible for their education. They are acutely aware that very young people are not given this much freedom or this much responsibility almost anywhere in the world.

Although the school has no curriculum, there are some certainties about what students learn. They learn to know themselves. They learn to ask for what they want, and see to it that they get it. They learn to ponder ethical questions. They learn how to concentrate. They learn how to try something and relish success, and they learn how to try something and fail at it—and try again.

The school is governed on the model of a traditional New England

Town Meeting. The daily affairs of the school are administered at the weekly School Meeting, at which each student and each staff member has one vote. Rules of behavior, use of facilities, expenditures, staff hiring, and all the routines of running an institution are determined by debate and vote at the School Meeting. In this way, students share fully the responsibility for effective management of the school and for the quality of life at school.

Infractions of the rules are dealt with through the School Meeting's judicial system, in which all members of the school community participate. The fair administration of justice is a key feature of Sudbury Valley and contributes much to the students' confidence in the school.

Sudbury Valley awards a high school diploma to students who are able to demonstrate that they are ready to function as responsible members of the community at large. Graduates have gone on to colleges and universities all over the country, and abroad. Most are admitted to their schools of first choice. Other graduates have entered directly into the worlds of business, trade, arts, crafts, and technical vocations.

Beyond the descriptions lies the reality of the school: a place where freedom is cherished, where mutual respect is the norm, where children and adults are comfortable with each other, where learning is integrated into life.

REVIEW:
Living Education
Family Learning Exchange

by Chris Mercogliano

There are a number of excellent small desktop journals coming our way these days and we thought this would be a good time to begin reviewing some of them for you.

Living Education is the journal of the Oak Meadow School, a homeschooling center based in Blacksburg, VA. A well-laid out 24 page bi-monthly, the current March/April '95 issue features a very interesting and well-researched historical analysis of the relationship between institutionalized schooling and crime. There are also a number of contributions from children of all ages, including a beautiful and lengthy essay by ninth grader Alysha Turner on the impact of literature on her life to date. A budding young writer herself, she takes us through some of the books and authors that she has been profoundly influenced by. It's enough to make an avid reader out of the stubbornest non-reader.

Subscriptions can be obtained by mailing a check for $18.00 ($33.00 foreign) to Oak Meadow School, P.O. Box 712, Blacksburg, VA 24063.

Another 24 page bi-monthly called *Family Learning Exchange, the Journal of Natural Learning, Family learning, and Homeschooling* states that its purpose is "to support and provide resources and information for families who have chosen to educate their children at home. We believe that our families are the foundation upon which our society is built, and only through building strong families can we hope to build a strong society." This lively magazine is filled with useful information, including a data base of relevant products and resources, reading lists and a national calendar of important homeschooling conferences and events. Featured in the March/April issue is one of the best articles about the mysterious, much misunderstood, and downright mythological subject of dyslexia that I have ever read. A lifelong "dyslexic" himself, the author proposes that what we call dyslexia is not some form of pathology, but rather is a special mode of thinking employed by certain individuals, as well as being their natural reaction to confusion. The magazine is worth getting hold of for this piece alone.

Subscriptions can be obtained by mailing a check for $15.00 to: Flex, P.O. Box 300, Benton City, WA 99320.

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LETTERS:

March 9, 1995

Clonlara
1289 Jewett Street
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104
313 769 4511

Dear Mary,

Just received my new issue of ΣΚΟΛΕ a few days ago. It's terrific. Your years of constancy with the project despite ups and downs have paid off, perhaps not financially, but as a contribution to society.

Chris' article on fear could not come, for me, at a better moment. This year, there were six teenagers who were really worried about how the freedom of Clonlara was affecting their ability to be productive in conventional school terms. This triggered my own latent fears that I was harming these kids by letting them run their own lives.

What we did was this: the six kids and I formed a "structure club", kind of a program within a program, to experiment with monthly self-chosen "assignments" in reading, writing, math, and research. I told them that I was willing, at their request, to encourage them to work on these projects at certain times of the day, but that I would stop cold if I felt we were getting into "why don't you, yes but.." games or any other form of passive resistance. We also agreed to discuss the various emotions and behavior patterns that came up within this framework. In other words, looking at the process was as important as evaluating products.

We've been doing this for two months now, and the patterns have sure been interesting to watch and discuss. I found myself occasionally slipping back into old public-school teacher modes of judging myself in terms of what they were doing or not doing, as well as judging them as people. This anxiety and anger would surface, and the line between reminding and nagging started to blur on some days. Students began to enact old "sure, in a minute" responses, making excuses to me, erecting defenses. When students would start to produce things, instead of taking simple sympathetic joy in their accomplishment, I would feel critical, compare it to my own rabid school achievement in high school, and so on. Thankfully, I'm sufficiently bored with these tired old tapes that I can't keep them up for long anymore.

In our group, we discuss this stuff as much as we talk about what people have gotten done or not. Recently, it came up for discussion that students were finishing things at home, and procrastinating about "turning them in", as the saying goes. So what's that all about? Ownership? Fear of criticism? Anyway, as we all get down to the nitty-gritty of the games that fear plays with us, it's fun to see all of us in the group, including me, take more ownership for our own learning, and our own lives.

No matter how many times I go around with teenagers on this loop, I keep coming back to the same starting point. This is that the uniform school-style "productivity" demanded of teenagers in society short-circuits, at least for some kids, some other very important internal processes that are crucial to the development of a free person. When kids start to just work because they want to create, or simply to have the peace that comes with concentration, or to fulfill their organic responsibilities to the group (planning menus for a trip, for example), it's beautiful. When they're struggling with defenses, games, and excuses, it's ugly. If I take a break from my fears, I can directly experience the truth of this, and trust it completely. Fear sucks. Of course, it's also a necessary teacher sometimes, as we ask where it comes from.

Our entire educational system is built on fear, and on the isolation of individuals competing with each other. André Houle compares 1940 with 1990, and blames TV and family disintegration for the downward slide. But I wonder if the seeds for the 1990's weren't present in the 1940's. The threat of enemies (Japan and Germany, then the Soviets and Chinese, now the "global competitive market") gets used to keep everyone on the fear treadmill, running on isolated competitive achievement tracks, with the family commanded to adapt to suit (as it still does today in Japan). But the anti-humanity of this kind of so-called order contains within it the makings of its own chaos, as stress overtakes those who "succeed", and apathy grows in those who don't. Japan too will unravel, in its own way. Or the need to "pull everyone together" will find some new outlet in outward national aggression, too horrible to contemplate.

Are creativity and productivity possible without fear? I'll accept that some fear is a natural ingredient of life; after all, it gives us something to grow out of, if nothing else. But we're not talking about fear as a problem in our system, we're talking about its use as the fundamental solution. All the pretty "motivational" posters (NUMBERS ARE YOUR FRIENDS!!!!!) covering it up just make it uglier. Do creativity and productivity have a higher function than making us individually successful, or "competitive in the global marketplace"? Am I willing to give up all the free, rambling discussion, the time to work out personal conflicts, and the road trips in order to keep everyone "on task" through fear?

What happens when we start to replace the curriculum of fear with a culture of conversation? Well, for one thing, a lot of fear comes up, because it's not what society wants from teenagers, or from teachers. When you create your own sub-culture, it can be scary. But perhaps that's the kind of fear that lets you know you're a fish checking out the land.

Anyway, feel free to publish this in your "letters" section. I'd still like to write an article, but I can't fit it in now. In fact, this is the *only* letter expressing any thoughts about education or my Clonlara free school experience that I have written since starting work here, that I can remember. So thanks for the inspiration.

Mihoko and I expect our first child this summer.

Good luck and good health to you.
Peace,
Nat

Nat Needle, now the Dean of the Campus School of Clonlara in Ann Arbor, Michigan, began his educational career as a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts, from whose ivy-covered walls he began striking out on his own, visiting alternative schools and making his plans for his own school, which became a reality during the late eighties: New Salem Academy, represented in Challenging the Giant *volume II on pages 74-78.*

Forced to close its doors because of financial stringencies, Nat's school still stands as a splendid example of his image of life, from which position of integrity and devotion he has not swerved. In fact, he was largely responsible for the founding of SKOLE, the proposal for which came from him at a regional conference at his school in 1985!

Nat's quite a guy—a born teacher with tremendously varied gifts as well as a pianist, composer, an irresistible comedian and a natural philosopher. Quoting from the conclusion to his NSA essay, on the subject of preventing

"burn-out":

Over the years we have set up little tripwires within our schools which remind us of the wonder of our jobs: an all-school meeting, a class in the woods, a hug from a fellow teacher, another alternative schools conference. Then we catch our breath, hit ourselves on the head, try to figure out how we got here, and go back to this amazing work.

We keep on trucking on this long, endless alternative school path, encouraging the growth of young human beings who, just maybe, from their experiences in our schools, will grow to be a little more open, compassionate, wise and free than we are. It's an ennobling task for all of us to be what a Baha'i friend of mine once called "layers of seeds, heralds of the dawn."

Thanks, Nat! Have a good baby, Mihoko and you! We'll be waiting to hear!

* * *

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Following are snapshots taken last summer at the Second Berkshire Live-out. I don't have written accounts of what we talked about during our week-long get-together at Journey's End farm, but perhaps the images will convey a little of the richness of that week of sharing. We do have video tapes chronicling the week's discussions, as we do from the summer before—but haven't yet found someone to help us edit them for wider distribution. Anyone know where we can find someone to do this? We have a treasure trove of ideas, experiences and information in these tapes!

We'll be sending out notices when we know who will be sharing their expertise and wisdom with us, but if you'd like to register early, you may send us $5 for each day and person who will be coming (children under six free), remembering that you may choose to set up your tent in the orchard or sleep in the farmhouse (either in a bed or on a floor mattress, depending on how many come), and whether to bring food to share or pay a couple of dollars per day to eat with us at the common table.

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Parenting duties and pleasures: Chris Spicer, President of the Folk Education Association of America, his son and Nancy Ost at the kitchen table

Diana, mother Kathy Manley and Eve, admirers

Keep-away

Come hither!

Spectators

Group Events

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Free-for-all

281

Visit to Glacial Prehistoric Potholes in Shelburne Falls:
Madeline Leue dipping her toe into the cold water

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Lunch at Glacial Prehistoric Potholes in Shelburne Falls: Lily and Chris Mercogliano, Ian Leue, Elisha Mittleman and Madeline Leue

ΣΚΟΛΕ

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ΣΚΟΛΕ

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Editorial Staff
Ellen Becker
Larry Becker
Connie Frisbee Houde
Mary Leue
Betsy Mercogliano
Chris Mercogliano

Publisher
Down-to-Earth Books

Photographs
Connie Frisbee House
Betsy Mercogliano

Printer
Ed Hamilton, Celecom Corp.
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Cover pictures: front, our Free School work gang at the Grafton Peace Pagoda (complete with faithful dog companion), relaxing after a hard day's work; back, the nearly completed Pagoda itself.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

I really hope this won't be a "difficult" issue to read through. I've tried intersperse what, to me, at least, are "easy" reading pieces in between ore content-filled ones. The last issue was fun because it had so much eat stuff from kids, which, although filled with valuable information, ill "read easily"—and the next one will too, I think, since I'm getting ore and more material from kids. So this one is perhaps more along the nes of valuable material for thought and information than the immediacy pleasurable reading. A few rare people can do both, but most of us ve had the juice sucked out of us by college professors. Or maybe it's st me.

It's odd, really, being an editor. I don't have any more impetus than yone else to plow through "serious" reading. I love to read things that eate imagery and feelings more than I do problem-solving thinking eces. But having to work with these thought pieces as I do in order to lit, proof and format them enables me to penetrate the "screen" I so often ut up unconsciously when reading demands "work." The reward for me still occasionally unexpected! It's as though I somehow put myself on e same wave-length as the author, and the theme and spirit of the piece me right through to me!

I'm saying all this, not knowing whether or not it may be relevant for a t of other people but wanting to say it anyway. It is for me. I promise u—if you can find out how to penetrate your own defenses against new formation in a time that is filled up and overflowing with enough formation to give everyone the bellyache—at least the articles that appear n *these* pages constitute a gold mine for people who need information and couragement!

Dayle Bethel's two are on tremendously important topics for parents: culturation via the youth culture, which turns out so many "Lord of the lies" crypto-rebels whose violence simmers beneath the surface—and the biquitous issue of TV and the many effects of its "sub-culture"—violent, ssivizing, cliché-ridden, shallow—on the developmental needs of ildhood. Please read them carefully!

John Gatto's first article, offering us nine assumptions and twenty- ne facts about schooling (all bad), is fascinating in its richness and the nexpected tenor of his mind. We had originally planned to publish only is one, but the "National Socialization of Children" article burst on our orizon like a fireworks display. We're using it in both *ΣΚΟΛΕ* and the *urnal of Family Life*. It may make you mad—it may even frighten you if you begin giving it credence, which I do!—but read it! Please.

Chris Mercogliano's article, "The Therapeutic School," is easy reading because it has so many stories about real kids in it. The point he is making is also important, in a time when fashions have veered away from looking at learning as often involving a therapeutic model. The specialization process by which we define professional capability all too often leaves kids hanging—too dysfunctional to fit into regular classrooms, too "normal" to fit into "Special Education" classes, too poor to afford high priced therapists. Chris is suggesting that a good teacher can often work "miracles" through human interventions that succeed in nipping trouble in the bud.

Bennett Wong and Jock McKeen's article on "Self-esteem" in a sense carries this insight into adult life. Turn to the end of the article and gaze at their unforgettable images before you tackle their article. Its limpidity and keenness will then come through to you more fully—I guarantee!

Mohammad Yadegari's article on the teaching of math also helps to sweep away a lot of cobwebs from the mundane didacticism of the average classroom teacher. I hope its relevance to conventional schooling doesn't turn you off, because it's got a lot of real value in it. **André Houle**'s hortatory article in effect chiding Americans with nineteenth century (and earlier!) no-nothingism reads a bit flat-footedly, but its heart is in the right place. His stuff on William Deming is precious! Too bad the Japanese got it but we didn't—or wouldn't!

The four articles reprinted from *A Voice for Children* are chock full of gems. There's a much-belated review of **Albert Lamb's** 1992 edition of A.S. Neill's writings on Summerhill, a copy of which I (also) received from Albert just a month ago! It is a splendid book, restoring the material on such "controversial" topics as fluoridation, Wilhelm Reich and McCarthyism which his first editor omitted, and adding other Neillisms his first book didn't give us. Thanks, Albert. Neill lives again! Reading it made me remember all over again how splendid the old man was! The other three are: a Q. and A. session with Neill himself, another on the issue of respect as the foundation of "freedom," by **Trevor Phillips,** who also appeared in *ΣΚΟΛΕ* a few years back—and a delicious one by *Voice*'s editor **Ed Jones** on the total bliss of real (self-directed) learning and how schools can kill it.

Alan Bonsteel's article on schools of choice is both informative and warm-hearted. We hope he'll send us more of his stuff for future issues. The Antigonish movement article that follows—on Coady and MacDonald, its founders—taken from *Option*, the Folk Education Association of

America journal, was sent me by Chris Spicer, its president, and fits in very nicely with the point being made by Alan: namely, that truly successful schools are communities that nurture their members. Amen and amen.

Then follow three book reviews by Chris Mercogliano: first, of **Claudia Berman**'s excellent new book on her (alternative) Alma Mater, the School Around Us, in Kennebunkport, Maine—plus two reviews of small educational newsletters. Two fascinating letters bring this issue to its close ...**BUT...** sandwiched in between the reviews and the letters, sort of like fudge icing between two layers of cake, is a review of a "**blue**" Disney film they had the gall to name "Pocahontas"! Russell Means, a native American ex-activist and the voice for Powhatan, Pocahontas' father, thought the film was great.

This hit me hard because I'm a great supporter of Dennis Banks, another of the Wounded Knee AIM Three (Means, Banks and Peltier), through a mutual friend, Jun-san Yasuda, a Japanese Buddhist nun and a long-time friend of Dennis. Leonard Peltier, the second, is still in prison. A few years back we published an account by our Larry Becker of a hearing he attended in North Dakota as backup for Bill Kunstler and Peltier's other defense attorneys, to review Leonard's parole options. (The answer was "no.") Dennis served his term in the penitentiary in Montana! Well, read what Jamie Mullins, a descendant of Pocahontas, and Nancy Egloff, a research historian for the Jamestown settlement, have to say about the film.

My personal advice: don't take your kids to see it! But then, I majored in history. Does that make me prejudiced? Guess so. At least where this travesty is concerned.

Dayle Bethel, a long-time supporter of and contributor to ΣΚΟΛΕ, has been teaching in Japan for many years, first as the dean and a professor of education at the Osaka Learning Center, more recently, at the Kyoto Learning Center, of the International University. These two thoughtful essays were actually sent to our sister journal, the Journal of Family Life, *in response to our Fall issue, the theme of which was "Children in Families," but we decided to publish them here, particularly since so many* JFL *subscribers are also subscribers to ΣΚΟΛΕ. The alternative would have been to wait until we came back to the theme of children and their education—but Dayle's articles, and the issues he raises, are important enough that we didn't want to wait! Thanks, Dayle!*

MODERN CULTURE AND THE PEER SOCIALIZATION MYTH

by Dayle M. Bethel

Myths, the stories and legends which grow up to explain "why" things are as they as they are an indispensable part of culture. Myths provide the justification or rationalization for a culture's core beliefs and practices. Myths are powerful. They play an important role in the shaping of individual character and have a major impact on a society as a whole. But myths, on the other hand, are but natural emergents from the assumptions and values which underlie them. Thus, myths can be beneficial or detrimental for individuals and for societies, depending on the nature of the assumptions and the quality of the values from which they spring.

While recognizing that there are many noble and constructive myths which sustain modern industrial societies, it will be my purpose here to consider a deeply rooted myth which is being called into question today by some scholars and social critics. The essence of the myth to which I refer goes something like this: "Healthy, normal development of children requires that they be 'socialized' by being placed with other children in play groups, nursery schools, kindergartens, and schools, and the earlier this 'socialization' begins the better."

This myth is powerful. In the United States and in Japan, two of the world's leading industrial societies, it is extremely rare to find persons who do not accept the myth of the need for early childhood socialization of children by other children. The members of these two societies, with but few exceptions, seem to be convinced that placing their child with other children as early as possible is the essential, appropriate, and "right" way to assure healthy social and emotional growth of a child.

In the United States and in Japan, two of the world's leading industrial societies, it is extremely rare to find persons who do not accept the myth of the need for early childhood socialization of children by other children.

This myth legitimates and justifies our practice of taking children away from their parents and placing them in school rooms for twelve or more years of their early lives. Modern societies are dominated by their schools, and it is taken for granted that spending the early years of life in school is the best if not the only way for a child to grow up.

There is, however, another point of view which merits being heard. Those who hold this viewpoint point out that, contrary to what our history books have led us to believe, schools, as we know them, did not develop to strengthen liberty and democracy. Rather, as Alvin Toffler notes, schools developed in modern industrial societies to ensure a constant supply of obedient workers needed by the industrial and business élites of those societies, thus enabling the members of those élites to make profits. Mass education first came into being for purely economic reasons. Mass public schooling

> . . . machined generation after generation of young people into a pliable, regimented work force. . . Taken together, the nuclear family and the factory-style school formed part of a single integrated system for the preparation of young people for roles in industrial society. (*The Third Wave*. New York: Bantam, 1981, pp. 29-30)

Sydney Jourard, an American psychologist, notes also the economic basis of schooling in the United States:

> The ultimate source of our curricula, in my opinion, has been the demands of the business-military-industrial-complex leaders, who by one means or another (mostly money) ensure that those views are inculcated, those views and people are validated, and those skills indoctrinated which will perpetuate the status quo. And so we let a population which is not educated but one that is trained to do what it must do to keep the system running. A mystified population which believes that the highest purpose of man is to consume goods. (*The Transparent Self.* New York: D. Van Nostrand Company 1971, p. 113)

Dissatisfaction with schools, together with a growing understanding of the extent to which schools and education in modern societies have been influenced by economic factors, has led a small minority of persons to reject the popular view of the need for early socialization of growing children by other children in schools. And while we may not agree with them or their conclusions, the issue they are raising is an extremely important one which must, I believe, be confronted. Thus it may be wise for us to listen to what this growing minority of people in our midst are saying.

There are two aspects of the alternative view. First is a realization, based on a growing body of research findings, that little children are better socialized by parental example and sharing than by other little children. Small children who spend little of their time with their parents and most of their time with their peers tend to become peer-dependent, and in recent years this tendency has moved down to preschool.

According to the results of studies conducted by Raymond Moore of the Hewitt Research Foundation, such peer dependency brings loss of (1) self-worth, (2) optimism, (3) respect for parents, and (4) trust in peers. Moore concludes that, contrary to popular opinion, little children are not best socialized by other children because the more persons they have around them, the fewer meaningful contacts they have. Furthermore, he found that socialization is not neutral, but tends to be either positive or negative:

> Positive or altruistic and principled sociability is firmly linked with the family—with the quantity and quality of self-worth. This in turn is dependent largely on the track of values and experience provided by the family, at least until

the child can reason consistently. In other words, the child who works and eats and plays and has his rest and is read to daily, more with his parents than with his peers, senses that he is part of the family corporation—needed, wanted, depended upon. He is the one who has a sense of self-worth. (*The Tropical Homeschooler.* No. 5, May/June, 1993.)

Moore suggests that it would be best for children if they did not enter school until they are at least 8 or 10 years old. He has found that children who do wait until they are older to enter school usually become social leaders. They know where they are going. They tend to be independent in values and skills. They are able to avoid the dismal pitfalls and social cancer of peer dependency. And they tend to become productive, self-directed citizens.

> ***...the overall effect, of school experience and the peer dependency it fosters is alienation of the child from the parents and the family.***

Moore concludes that negative, me-first sociability in a child develops in most cases because peer group association has replaced meaningful parental contacts and responsibility experiences in the home during the first 8 to 12 years. The early peer influence generally brings an indifference to family values which defy parental correction. The child does not yet consistently understand the "why" of parental demands when her peers replace her parents as role models at too early an age. In other words, the overall effect, of school experience and the peer dependency it fosters is alienation of the child from the parents and the family.

We have already seen that the peer-dependent child becomes stripped of a sense of self-worth and attitudes of hope, respect and trust to which self-worth gives birth. What the parent does, then, in sending very young children off to school is akin to casting them adrift on the vast sea of life without a compass or necessary guidance. If this is a valid assessment of contemporary schooling and the youth culture it has created, it is little wonder that young people today tend to be confused.

This brings into focus a second reason that a few people are beginning to question the myth of early childhood socialization by peers. Peer socialization is not only damaging to individual personality growth, it is ultimately devastating for society in that it; creates an alienated, artificial culture composed of frightened, hurting, angry, and irresponsible youth.

The reality of modern youth culture has been noted—and deplored—by Joseph Gauld, an American educator. He writes that we have created

> .. a new and mindless youth culture that dominates youngsters today. In *Lord of the Flies* William Goulding portrays the brutal inadequacies of youngsters who were forced to cope with life without benefit of adult guidance. We see this alarming gang and clique mentality everywhere in America today: the drive-by shootings; the metal detectors in schools; the dominant themes of drugs, sex, and violence; and not just in disadvantaged areas. Students nationally would tell adults that their schools are "unsafe"—if adults were tuned to hear them.
> Underneath a protective bravado, students are unhappy and intimidated by their youth culture. But it has become so commanding, and adults so unaware, students cannot express their deeper concerns to parents and teachers, much less to themselves. (*The Hyde Foundation Newsletter*, Vol. 3, No. 1, July 1993.)

Gauld recognizes, as many critics of contemporary education do not, that any attempt to confront the problems of modern youth culture must look not only at the negative socializing effect of contemporary schools, but at the woeful lack of effective parenting in our societies as well. Thus, he calls parents to recognize the importance or being positive role models for their children and to educate themselves so they can carry out that role effectively.

One attempt to confront the problems posed by contemporary youth culture has led to the development of a homeschooling movement which is growing in the United States and is just beginning in Japan. Much more research is needed of this phenomenon, but some comparative studies of home schooled children and children who had attended traditional schools have been conducted in recent years, and the results are eye-opening, to say the least. A study conducted at the University of Florida, for example, concluded that children who were taught at home by their parents had consistently fewer behavioral problems than children who had attended traditional schools. (*The Tropical Homeschooler* No. 5, May/June, 1993). This study found that home schooled children tended to talk quietly, play well together in groups and take the initiative in inviting other children to join them. Traditionally schooled children tended to be more aggressive, loud, and competitive than home-schooled children of the same age. Other studies indicate that home-schooled children are proving capable of superior academic work as well. (Pat Montgomery, "Parents as Teachers: It Works," Clonlara School, Ann Arbor, Michigan, unpublished paper).

Gail Nagasako, a mother in Hawaii who is homeschooling, is convinced that homeschooling is better for her children than attending traditional schools. (*The Tropical Homeschooler* no. 5, May/June, 1993). Her ten-year old son Thumper has attended traditional schools as well as spending some years in homeschooling. In a revealing comment, Thumper makes an interesting comparison between his feelings when he shares in special social events with other homeschooled children and when he is with school children: "You know what I like about being around the homeschoolers? I can just be myself. I don't have to worry about 'being cool' like I do around the school kids."

Not everyone will agree that homeschooling is the answer to our educational problems or to the problems created by modern youth culture. Furthermore, most parents today would have to make major adjustments in their own lives, in their values, and in their priorities in order to serve as positive role models and learning guides for their children in homeschooling situations. On the other hand, the youth cultures we are creating are not going to go away. All indications are that youth cultures, to which policies prompted by the peer socialization myth have given birth, will increasingly draw children and young people into webs of fear, violence, and other forms of anti-social behavior. If nothing else, the comparisons between homeschooled children and traditionally schooled children which are now coming to light may cause us to rethink and reevaluate the peer socialization myth and give greater attention to the needs of children and youth.

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, in his day, warned against separating children from their families, from nature, and from society as we have done. Makiguchi called his countrymen to build an industrial society and schools on foundation principles and values very different from those the people of the United States had chosen. If the Japanese who lived in that earlier day and since had heeded his call, Japan would likely be a better society today. As we prepare to enter a new century, we will do well to look more seriously at Makiguchi's alternative image of what makes a good society and at his efforts to realize such a society in Japan.

> *Children are protected by neither the First nor the Fifth Amendment when they stand before the secular priest, the teacher. The child must confront a man who wears an invisible triple crown, like the papal tiara, the symbol of triple authority combined in one person. For the child, the teacher pontificates as pastor, prophet, and priest—he is at once guide, teacher and administrator of a sacred ritual. He combines the claims of medieval popes in a society constituted under the guarantee that these claims shall never be exercised together by one established and obligatory institution—church or state.*
>
> *—Ivan Illich,* **Deschooling Society,**
> *Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1971.*

VISUAL MEDIA AND CHILDHOOD'S DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

by Dayle M. Bethel

An artificial youth culture which has emerged within some contemporary societies is one aspect of a larger problem of cultural values and assumptions which underlie those societies. Some of these values and assumptions are flawed and at variance with reality. As a result, some of the social structures and behavior patterns which are based on them are harmful for psychological health and social well being. Two of the key social structures of these societies in particular have contributed to the creation of a youth culture, mass compulsory schooling and the mass media. The role of schooling in the development of widespread peer dependency among children and youth has been considered in a previous article. It is my purpose here to examine the effects of visual media in creating some of the pathological conditions inherent in the youth culture.

It has been estimated that the average child in the United States will have been exposed to 20,000 hours of television by the age of 20.

It has been estimated that the average child in the United States will have been exposed to 20,000 hours of television by the age of 20. This estimate is probably conservative because in recent years even many preschoolers begin watching several hours of television per day at about age two. There are, to be sure, differences between Japan and the United States with respect to children's television viewing, of which the hours many Japanese children spend in study at *jukus* is one. But in spite of *juku* time, an average Japanese child interacts with some type of visual media many hours each day. One 13 year old girl, for example, confided that she routinely watches television and video programs in her room, rarely getting to bed before midnight, and she understood that some of her peers were staying up until one or two o'clock in the morning.

To television and VCRs we must now add computer games and, if some of the producers of visual hardware and software have there way, each child will soon have her own personal computer in school. What this means is that many children in the new "information age" will spend a large portion of their waking hours sitting in front of some form of visual media.

Some parents worry about the long range effects in their children's lives of so many hours sitting in front of a screen. (And now, with the advent of hand-held computer games, watching a screen need no longer be confined to sitting. A child can carry it with him wherever he goes). Many parents would like to act to make changes in the way their children's time is spent, but the obstacles which they confront are formidable. Most do not have the motivation or the patience to endure the hassles involved in separating their children from viewing. In most families, for instance, any attempt to remove the personal television sets that children watch alone in their rooms would create a major family crisis. When to these internal family factors is added the intense pressure exerted by the influence of peers who obtain every new media toy or gadget as soon as it comes on the market and who can make the screens in their homes available to a child faced with restrictions on viewing, even minimal control of children's time appears, to parents, to be next to impossible.

Some educational specialists, and some parents, too, feel that concerns about the effects of visual media on children have been exaggerated. Those who express this view point to the positive aspects of these media for learning, particularly their potential for stimulating imagination and creativity. This cannot be denied. Visual media do offer rich possibilities for life enhancement of both children and adults. Yet this implies a recognition of the use of such media within a context of limits and for clearly defined

> ***Some of the evidence which is accumulating, for example, suggests a possible relationship between the violence and pornographic material children are seeing on television and VCRs and the increasing violence and anti-social behavior committed by children and young people...***

purposes. That this does not describe the present situation in regard to children and visual media is obvious. These media are now generally being used without regard for limits or for constructive purposes.

A considerable body of research, as well as practical experience, indicates that parental concerns about the amount of time their children are engaged with television and other visual media are justified. Some of the evidence which is accumulating, for example, suggests a possible relationship between the violence and pornographic material children are seeing on television and VCRs and the increasing violence and anti-social behavior committed by children and young people, such as that described in Seiji Fujii's *Boy's Town: The Concrete Murder*. Parents cannot help but be concerned about much of the content of commercial television and computer games which their children watch. But apart from issues of content, making children into passive "watchers" and program manipulators as opposed to "initiators" is an alarming perversion of childhood's developmental tasks.(Jane Healy, Holistic Education Review, Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 15) Robert MacNeil, one of America's prominent TV anchormen, has warned of the adverse effects on children of excessive television viewing. (The President's Leadership Forum, State University of New York, November 3, 1984) According to MacNeil, constant television viewing robs a child of one of his most precious gifts, the ability to concentrate and focus his attention. Television discourages and destroys the child's ability to concentrate. Why is the loss of this ability disturbing? It is because almost anything interesting and rewarding in life requires some concentrated, consistently applied effort; its absence in a child's experience is limiting and ultimately impoverishing. Television conditions a child to apply no effort. It provides instant gratification; it makes time pass without pain.

Have you ever wondered why young people today are so easily bored? I have had young mothers tell me that they dread days when their children are not in school. It drives them frantic trying to come up with ways to entertain their children and keep them from becoming bored, irritable, and getting into trouble. The average young person today becomes bored almost the instant he cannot find some ready-made activity to occupy his time. He must be constantly on the move, when there is no screen available, to avoid boredom. We have come to accept this as normal behavior for children and youth. In fact, it is not normal behavior.

Children who are fortunate enough to grow up within a context of the world of nature and a real, human-scale community are not easily bored. They develop as a normal dimension of their personalities what Rachel Carson calls a "sense of wonder." A child who is enabled to acquire a sense of awe and appreciation for the life-giving systems, natural and social, which sustain her life, develops deep inner resources: curiosity, resourcefulness, creativity, which [illegible] ut a lifetime [illegible] d does not suffer from boredom, is not constantly seeking new thrills and distractions, and does not require constant supervision and entertainment.

This was one of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's central teachings. He believed that a sense of vibrant aliveness, a sense of wonder and awe and appreciation toward life and nature was every child's birthright. He believed, further, that a child can attain the full potential of his humanness only through direct, active, personal communication with the natural world, and for Makiguchi this meant the child's immediate social world as well. To live as a human being, in his understanding, meant to love and understand and appreciate the earth. To live as a human being is to grow up feeling and experiencing the mysterious cycles and processes of nature and to sense that one is oneself an integral part of nature. It is through such interaction with the earth that the characteristics which we recognize as truly human are ignited and nurtured within us. The earth is the source of morality and ethical behavior in human experience. Thus, Makiguchi wrote upon one occasion:

> The natural world inspires us, fosters our wisdom, and family, friends, neighbors, and community groups nurture us in so many ways. This immediate, direct experience which we can have with the natural and social environments of our communities fosters compassion, good will, friendship, kindness, sincerity, and humble hearts.
>
> —*Jinsei Chirigaku*, 1903

We have treated children like so many cut flowers which we pick and keep alive in a vase. We can keep the flowers alive for a while, but sooner or later they will die.

It is rare to find young people today who possess this sense of wonder, this spiritual aliveness, and the attitudes of love and responsibility toward nature and society which stem from it. These characteristics are lacking in the lives and personalities of a majority of modern youth. Why is this? What has happened? What have we done? What we have done is becoming increasingly clear. We have short-changed our children. We have cut them off from their roots. We have treated children like so many cut flowers which we pick and keep alive in a vase. We can keep the flowers alive for a while, but sooner or later they will die. Their roots are gone. There is no way for them to gain nourishment. They can no longer grow normally.

In much the same way we have in our society cut children off from the sources from which they can obtain spiritual and emotional nourishment. We have plucked them out of their natural and social communities and created an artificial, sterile world for them to inhabit during the most important, formative years of their lives. The process whereby this separate, artificial world was created in modern societies for children to inhabit is, of course, a complex and many-faceted one, including the rise of giant cities and the concurrent destruction of authentic community life. But, as noted above, one of the key social structures directly involved was the school. We began building this artificial world for children when we decided to place them in a school room and make them passive recipients of masses of fragmented, and to them meaningless, factual knowledge for six or more hours every day. We proceeded further in the creating of that sterile world our children inhabit when we gave them television and computers. Many hours of passively sitting before a television or computer game each day, in addition to their school experience, cuts them off completely from active participation in the systems upon which their lives depend for nourishment. Makiguchi was horrified when he realized what the schools of his day were doing to children. It was that realization which led him to propose, among other things, a half-day school system. I wonder how he would feel if he were alive today.

Even as I am writing, a news report indicates that police are at a loss as to how to deal with hot rodders. Groups of concerned parents, PTAs, educators, government officials, meet throughout the country to consider and deplore the growing incidence of *ijime*, "concrete murders," youth suicides and, more recently, increasing drug use among young people. These conditions are the inevitable outcome of the kind of world we have consigned them to.

The problems for parents and children posed by visual media and the youth culture are difficult and complex, but they are not insoluble. One reason for hope is a realization that a few of today's young people have managed to retain a sense of wonder and appreciation which they express in loving, responsible behavior toward nature and society. But they are exceptions; they are the fortunate ones who have had, in the midst of the negative influences of their culture, opportunities to glimpse a different world; or, as the poet has so meaningfully expressed it, they have listened to a different drummer. These young people, it turns out upon close acquaintance with them, have been able to find character models outside of their peer culture and the vapid, media-created models afforded by television and the popular and sports cultures. We can learn from such youth something about the sources of their wholeness.

Another cause for optimism is that some families and communities, both in Japan and in various other countries, are beginning to work together to better understand the problems affecting youth and to seek solutions. Some families, for example, have found creative solutions to the problem of television viewing. Reports of their efforts and the methods which have proven successful for them can help us in our own search for solutions and our efforts to create more nurturing environments for children and youth. A review of some of these positive and hopeful developments will be the topic of a subsequent article.

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It must be a horrible thing to witness a murder or other serious crime of violence. When I was growing up in the peaceful college community of Iowa City, violence was virtually unknown to me. Not only had I never witnessed a murder, there were only two or three even to talk about. What a change today. The average American child, by the age of fourteen, has witnessed eleven thousand murders. Where could a child see so much violence? Why, on television, of course.

... There's a stranger in town. It's called television. It's killed eleven thousand people before our children's very eyes. The law's no help to us. We need a little vigilante action of our own if we're ever to recapture our town, our children, and our civilization.

—Nicholas Johnson, Media Watch,
Newsletter of the National
Citizens Committee for Broadcasting,
March, 1976.

Before we plunge into the global mind-sweep of John Taylor Gatto, two of whose articles begin on page 19, I decided to offer you this poignant excerpt from the newsletter of the Community School in Camden, Maine, which is just about my favorite alternative school (after ours)! Over the years I've used a lot of their material, and Emanuel Pariser's brilliant theoretical papers on working with disturbed teen-agers based on the work of his school, appear in Challenging the Giant. *If ΣΚΟΛΕ is only about "what's wrong," no matter how insightful the analysis may be, we are still left without possible blueprints for setting "it" right. So I hope ΣΚΟΛΕ is as much about "what's right about what's wrong"—or even simply "what's right"—as it is about"wrongness." These people at the Community School are in the business of turning "wrongness" into "rightness," and they are clearly speaking with total authenticity . Listen for it, please! It's a rare commodity.*

THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL NEWSLETTER No. 62, APRIL 1995

Entries from the Log, Term 43

It's October 17, once again a full moon, which puts me in the best of moods. So far things aren't so bad here except I miss my friends incredibly. But I'm beginning to adjust to my new surroundings. I get along with most of the kids here except for occasional disagreements. It's pretty incredible to think that in five-and-a-half months I'll be graduating. In fact, it's amazing. I never thought I'd get an actual high-school diploma.

—Jay

The real world...
Hmmmm...
Sounds fun, exciting, scary.
Maybe I'll try it, but
Maybe I'll suffer, lose, and
Die.
Why so scared?
Afraid you can't make
It out there, Kate?
Afraid you'll make another
mess up like all the others?
It's gonna be a long battle
And guess who's fighting it?

You—
Me—

—Kate

Dear Community School,

You have taught me about people, community, and society. You have taught me that there are beautiful people in the world. You are beautiful. Thank you.

—Autumn

To whoever cares ,

This may seem weird coming from me, but every once in awhile I notice how much time I've spent here and how much I'm going to miss this.

—Jay

I am the exact replica of my mother's pain—her pain as a youth struggling with love-shit. This is frightening. She could have spared me. But no. I wish I was free from this dumb stuff, but I am stuck with living a life which has already occurred. I don't want her pain, her confusion, her addictions, but she couldn't teach me another story.

It is monotonous here, lonely as everywhere, and there is dead youth and hate towards staff, but sort of we will come more alive 'cuz we've all got cool spirits. I really respect everyone. But what I know a concept we can't even ever comprehend and fully joyously have knowledge of is that this place is a haven, it is beautiful, & we may long for it later.

—Becca

Quote: "I have trouble understanding the staff because I can't see past your walls of grandeur."

—Josh

Early Conflict: When people talk out loud about stuff they don't like or things they don't agree on in front of other people who like the things and everything is getting put down, it really makes people feel terrible.

—Judy

I can't see why it would bother you if I said I didn't like your music. It shouldn't matter to you if I don't like your music; all that should matter is that you like it. Who cares if I think it rots? It's all just an opinion, and you shouldn't take offense to that. I didn't say you rot; I said the music did. Sorry.

—Jay

There are conflicts here. Some seem to be matters of style; some matters of gender; some matters of loudness. Whatever, the conflict resolution process will probably not make things worse. Ignoring them will probably make them worse.

Conflict resolution (mediation, etc.) depends on there being sufficient goodwill or desire to solve problems. Is there enough goodwill here? Mediation class Tuesdays at 7:00. Peace.

—Bob

After I talked to the staff this evening, I felt really good. I liked a lot of the things that they said to me, and I've been thinking about them a lot. Good things are always nice to hear. Criticisms I find a little hard to accept, but it was nice because I know I was being criticized in a constructful way. Thank you for understanding me.

—Autumn

My dear friends, my dear strangers:

You have all been accepted into this intense, close, tense, wonderful world for the next five months. I call you "dear friends and strangers" because you are all these things to me. You are all dear to me because you are the core of my life's work. My work is dear to me—you are my work. I call you friends because I spend many hours of my week with you, and I enjoy much of that time. I share my thoughts and feelings with you. I am concerned for your well being. I call you strangers because I will never know any of you well enough in six months to feel I truly "know" you, understand you, or relate to you. I am grateful for this opportunity to step into your lives for a short time and be present.

Thank you for this gift.

—Jen

From a Former Student:

Dearest Community School Staff Personnel,

Hello! I've decided to write this letter in many colors due to my new discovery of their beauty. It's very late at night (my favorite time of day), and I decided to write a letter before I drifted off into a delightful slumber.

Earlier this evening I found myself in a state of deep thought that I have become increasingly familiar with. During my time of self discovery I thought of the holiday of Christmas. I thought of December of last year. I thought of my brothers and sisters at C-School. I thought of Bob's passionate dislike of Christmas. I always thought it was funny for someone that looks so much like our beloved traditional Santa Claus to feel that way. I remembered my term's pitiful yet so spirited abused holiday tree.

I thought of work, dinner time, camping trips, the trouble I got myself into, the music room, and the weekends with Randall. (Where is that guy?) And last of all, graduation. The moment of truth indeed. I remember sitting there with the past five months racing through my head. I felt like bawling my eyes out as I looked at all my friends to my right and left wondering what was in store for the students and teachers. Even though my diploma was so swiftly taken back for the next six months, I've never had so much positive energy bouncing around inside me than when I walked out of that event.

Since then I've come back for my diploma, lived in a yurt, lived at home, relapsed with drugs and alcohol, had a minor life crisis, and moved to Philadelphia. Now I am here in the big exciting unnatural city living with my aunt. Everything is going very well. I'm in a definite forward motion. My aunt is extremely supportive of my decisions. I'm attending A. A. meetings and working on my twelve steps. I'm seeing a really fun *analyst*.

And I just got accepted into the Philadelphia University of Arts. I didn't just get accepted: They liked me so much and thought I had so much to offer they told me not to bother with my SATs. (Thanks for all the help, Emanuel and everyone else.) I owe a lot of my present and future progress to the very supportive Community School. I don't know if you know, but you guys are a really precious part of my life. Thanks for all the unconditional loving and caring. It's the best gift anyone can receive, and I'll cherish it forever and ever. Merry Christmas to Bob and everybody....

—John Galasso

What follows are two blockbuster articles by our beloved John Gatto! You may say, why two? They are both long. Why not spread them out over two issues? Well, the answer is that it is our profound belief—and I suspect that belief is shared by John T.—that the time for making up our minds as Americans and as parents about what sort of life —what sort of world—we want for our vulnerable children is all too short! Childhood is an irrecoverable entity. Having been thoroughly schooled myself, and having been successful in performing what was asked of me, I think, looking back, that I may have minimized the problem faced by my own five. But I would not do it again! And the schools themselves, for whatever reason, are far less able now to accomplish the job they've been asked to do than they managed to do fairly well when life was simpler.

So when two such essential pieces of information (and eloquence!) arrive on our doorstep, our impulse is to get them out to you as quickly as possible! Read them with your hearts, please. John is very political, but every word he writes , like the writing of Jonathan Kozol, comes from the depth of his caring about "the lives of children," to use George Dennison's deathless phrase! But I expect most of you know that.

NINE ASSUMPTIONS OF SCHOOLING—
and Twenty-one Facts the Institution Would Rather Not Discuss
by John Taylor Gatto

I'll start off bluntly by giving you some data I'd be shocked if you already know. A few simple facts, all verifiable, which by their existence call into question the whole shaky edifice of American government compulsion schooling from kindergarten through college and its questionable connection with the job market. The implications of this data are quite radical so I'm going to take pains to ground it in the most conservative society on earth, the mountain world of Switzerland. You all remember Switzerland: that's where people put their money when they really want it to be really safe.

The Swiss just like us believe that education is the key to their national success, but that's where our similarity ends. In 1990 about 60% of American secondary school graduates enrolled in college, but *only* 22% did in Switzerland; in America almost 100% of our kids go to high school or private equivalents, but only a little over a fifth of the Swiss kids do. And yet the Swiss per capita income is the highest of any nation in the world and the Swiss keep insisting that virtually everyone in their country is highly educated!

What on earth could be going on? Remember it's a sophisticated economy which produces the highest per-capita paycheck in the world we're talking about, high for the lightly-schooled as well as for the heavily schooled, higher than Japan's, Germany's or our own. No one goes to high school in Switzerland who doesn't also want to go to college, three-quarters of the young people enter apprenticeships before high school. It seems the Swiss don't make the mistake that schooling and education are synonyms.

If you are thinking silently at this point that apprenticeships as a substitute for classroom confinement isn't a very shocking idea and it has the drawback of locking kids away from later choice of white collar work, think again. I wasn't only talking about blue-collar apprenticeships—although the Swiss have those, too—but white-collar apprenticeships in abundance. Many of the top management of insurance companies, manufacturing companies, banks, etc., never saw the inside of a high school, let alone a college.

Is that possible? The highest per capita income in the world and every single citizen also trusted by government to own dangerous weapons. [I forgot to tell you that the largely unschooled Swiss (by our standards) also *demand* universal gun ownership.] Ownership. If it puzzles you what connection I might be drawing between great prosperity, freedom from forced schooling where it is clearly inappropriate, and a profound mutuality, you think about it.

Well, shocking is the word for it, isn't it? I mean here you are putting away your loot in a Swiss bank because it's safe over there and not so safe here and now I've told you the bank president may only have a sixth grade schooling. Just like Shakespeare did.

As long as we're playing "did you know?", did you know that in Sweden, a country legendary for its quality of life and a nation which beats American school performance in every academic category, a kid isn't *allowed* to start school before the age of 7? The hard-headed Swedes don't want to pay for the social pathologies attendant on ripping a child away from his home and mother and dumping him into a pen with strangers. Can you remember the last time you worried about a Swedish Volvo breaking down prematurely or a Swedish jet engine failing in the air? Did you know that the entire Swedish school sequence is only 9 years long, a net 25% time and tax savings over our own 12-year sequence?

Exactly in whose best interest do you think it is that the *New York Times* or every other element of journalism, for that matter, doesn't make information like this readily accessible? How can you think clearly about our own predicament if you don't have it?

Did you know that Hong Kong, a country with a population the size of Norway's, beats Japan in every scientific and mathematical category in which the two countries compete? Did you know that Hong Kong has a school year ten and one half weeks shorter than Japan's? How on earth do they manage that if longer school years translate into higher performance? Why haven't you heard about Hong Kong, do you suppose? You've heard enough about Japan, I'm sure.

But I'll bet you haven't heard this about Japan. I'll bet you haven't heard that in Japan a recess is held after every class period.

Or did you know that in Flemish Belgium with the shortest school year in the developed world that the kids regularly finish in the top three nations in the world in academic competition? Is it the water in Belgium or what? Because it can't be the passionate commitment to government forced schooling, which they don't seem to possess.

Did you know that three British Prime Ministers in this century including the current one didn't bother to go to college? I hope I've made the point. If you trust journalism or the professional educational establishment to provide you with data you need to think for yourself in the increasingly fantastic socialist world of compulsion schooling, you are certainly the kind of citizen who would trade his cow for a handful of colored beans.

2.

Shortly into the 20th century American schooling decided to move away from intellectual development or skills training as the main justification for its existence and to enter the eerie world of social engineering, a world where "socializing" and "psychologizing" the classroom preempted attention and rewards. Professionalization of the administrative/teaching staff was an important preliminary mechanism to this end, serving as a sieve to remove troublesome interlopers and providing lucrative ladders to reward allies and camp followers.

Non-intellectual, non-skill schooling was supported by a strange and motley collection of fellow travelers: from unions, yes, but also from the ranks of legendary businessmen like Carnegie and Rockefeller, Ford and Astor; there were genuine ideologues like John Dewey, yes, but many academic opportunists as well like Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia; prominent colleges like Johns Hopkins and the University of Chicago took a large hand in the deconstruction of American academic schooling as well as a powerful core of private foundations and think tanks. Whether they did this out of conviction, for the advantage of private interests, or any hybrid of these reasons and more I'll leave for the moment to others for debate. What is certain is that the outcomes aimed for had little to do with why parents thought children were ordered into schools; such alien outcomes as socialization into creatures who would no longer feel easy with their own parents, or psychologization into dependable and dependent camp followers. Of what field general it wasn't clear except to say that whoever could win undisputed control of hiring and curriculum in a school district would have a clear hand in selecting and arranging the contents of children's minds.

In those early years of the 20th century a radical shift was well under way, transforming a society of farmers and craftspeople, fishermen and small entrepreneurs into the disciplined workforce of a corporate state, one in which ALL the work was being sucked into colossal governments, colossal institutions and colossal business enterprises—a society whose driving logic was comfort, security, predictability and consensus rather than independence, originality, risk-taking and uncompromising principle. In the gospels of social engineering this transformation was leading to a future utopia of welfare capitalism. With the problem of "production" solved, the attention of professional intellectuals and powerful men of wealth turned to controlling distribution so that a "rational" society, defined as a stable state without internal or external conflicts, could be managed for nations, regions and eventually the entire planet. In such a system, if you behave, you get a share of the divvy and if you don't, your share is correspondingly reduced. Keep in mind that a small farmer, a carpenter, a fisherman, seamstress or Indian fighter never gave undue attention to being well-behaved and you will begin to see how a centralized economy and centralized schooling box human behavior into a much narrowed container than what it normally would occupy and you will begin to see why intellectual development for all its theoretical desirability can never really be a serious goal for a society seeking comfort, security, predictability and consensus. Indeed, such a fate must be actively avoided.

Anyway, once this design was in place—and it was firmly in place by 1917—all that remained to reach the target was a continual series of experiments on public schoolchildren, some modest in scope, many breathtakingly radical like "IQ tests" or "kindergartens", and a full palette of intermediate colors like "multiculturalism", "rainbow" curricula and "universal self esteem". Each of these thrusts has a real behavioral purpose which is part of the larger utopia envisioned, yet each is capable of being rhetorically defended as the particular redress of some current "problem".

But the biggest obstacle to a planned society is parents. Parents have their own plans for their own kids; most often they love their kids, so their motivations are self-reinforcing, unlike those of schoolpeople who do it for a paycheck, and unless held in check even a few unhappy parents can disrupt the conduct of an educational experiment;

The second biggest obstacle to a planned society are religious sects, each of which maintains that God has a plan for all human beings, including children. And the third biggest obstacle is local values and ethnic cultures which also provide serious maps for growing up.

Each of these three is an external force bidding for the loyalty of children against the directions of the political State which owns the schools. One final obstacle—and a colossal one—is the individual nature of each particular child. John Locke pulled a whopper when he maintained that children are blank slates waiting to be written upon. He should have asked a few mothers about that. The fact is that if you watch children closely in controlled conditions as I did for 30 years as a school-teacher, you can hardly fail to conclude that each kid has a private destiny he or she is pulling toward wordlessly, a destiny frequently put out of reach by schoolteachers, school executives or project officers from the Ford Foundation.

In a planned society individuality, cultural identity, a relationship with God or a close-knit family are all elements which must be suppressed if they cannot be totally extinguished. The Soviet Union was an object lesson in this utopian undertaking and the United States has been going down the same road, albeit with more hesitations, at least since the end of the first world war. To accomplish such a complex transformation of nature into mechanism the general public must be led to agree to certain apparently sensible assumptions. Such as the assumption, for instance, that a college degree is necessary for a high-status career—even though Swiss corporations and the British government are often run by managers without college training. The security of the school institution depends on many such assumptions, some which by adroit concealments worthy of a card sharp seem to link schooling and future responsibility, and some which serve to exalt the political State, diminish essential human institutions like the family or define human nature as mean, violent and brutish. I'd like to pass nine specimens drawn from these latter categories of assumption in front of your minds to allow each of you to gauge which ones you personally accept, and to what degree.

3.

Nine Assumptions of Schooling

1. Social cohesion is not possible through other means than government schooling; school is the main defense against social chaos.

2. Children cannot learn to tolerate each other unless first socialized by government agents.

3. The only safe mentors of children are certified experts with government-approved conditioning; children must be protected from the uncertified, including parents.

4. Compelling children to violate family, cultural and religious norms does not interfere with the development of their intellects or characters.

5. In order to dilute parental influence, children must be disabused of the notion mother and father are sovereign in morality or intelligence.

6. Families should be encouraged to expend concern on the general education of everyone but discouraged from being unduly concerned with their own children's education.

7. The State has predominant responsibility for training, morals and beliefs. Children who escape state scrutiny will become immoral.

8. Children from families with different beliefs, backgrounds and styles must be forced together even if those beliefs violently contradict one another. Robert Frost, the poet, was wrong when he maintained that "good fences make good neighbors."

9. Coercion in the name of liberty is a valid use of state power.

4.

These assumptions and a few others associated with them lead directly to the shape, style and exercise of school politics. And these primary assumptions generate secondary assumptions which fuel the largely phony school debate played out in American journalism, a debate where the most important questions like "What *is* the end that justifies these means?" are never asked. I once had dinner in Washington at the same table as Fred Hechinger, education editor of the *New York Times*. When I raised the possibility that the *Times* framed its coverage to *omit* inconvenient aspects of school questions (such as challenging the presumed connection between quantity of money spent and quality of education) Mr. Hechinger became very angry and contemptuously dismissed my contention; almost the same thing happened on a different occasion, also in Washington, when I had dinner at the Council for Basic Education at the same table with Albert Shanker of the AFT. With that history of failure in opening a dialogue with some of the powers and principalities of institutional education (and I could add Lamar Alexander, Bill Bennett, Joe Fernandez, Diane Ravitch, Checker Finn and many other luminaries who seemed to hear me with impatience) I've been driven to trying to catch the ear of the general public in meeting the assumptions schools rely upon with contradictory facts open to formal verification—or the informal variety grounded in common sense. What follows are 21 of these disturbing contradictions raised for your contemplation:

21 Facts About Schooling

1. There is no relationship between the amount of money spent on schooling and "good" results as measured by parents of any culture. This seems to be because "education" is not a commodity to be purchased but an enlargement of insight, power, understanding and self-control almost completely outside the cash economy. Education is almost overwhelmingly an internally generated effort. The five American states which usually spend least per capita on schooling are the five which usually have the best test results (although Iowa which is about 30th in spending sometimes creeps into the honored circle).

2. There is no compelling evidence to show a positive relationship between length of schooling and accomplishment. Many countries with short school years outperform those with long ones by a wide margin.

3. Most relationships between test scores and job performance are illegitimate, arranged in advance by only allowing those testing well access to the work. Would you hire a newspaper reporter because he had "A"s in English? Have you ever asked your surgeon what grade he got in meat-cutting? George F. Kennan, intellectual darling of the Washington élite some while ago—and the author of our "containment" policy against the Soviet Union often found his math and science grades in secondary school below 60, and at Princeton he had many flunks, "D"s and "C"s. "Sometimes," he said, "it is the unadjusted student struggling to forge his own standards who develops within himself the thoughtfulness to comprehend." Dean Acheson, Harry Truman's Secretary of State, graduated from Groton with a 68 average. The headmaster wrote his mother, "He is... by no means a pleasant boy to teach." Einstein, we all know, was considered a high grade moron, as were Thomas Edison and Benjamin Franklin. Is there anybody out there who really believes that grades and test scores are the mark of the man? Then what exactly are they, pray tell? Q.E.D.

4. Training done on the job is invariably cheaper, quicker, and of much higher quality than training done in a school setting. If you wonder why that should be, you want to start, I think, by understanding that education and training are two different things, one largely residing in the development of good habits, the other in

the development of vision and understanding, judgment and the like. Education is self-training; it calls into its calculations mountains of personal data and experience which are simply unobtainable by any school-teacher or higher pedagogue. That simple fact is why all the many beautifully precise rules on how to think produce such poor results.

Schools* can *be restructured to teach children to develop intellect, resourcefulness and independence, but that would lead, in short order, to structural changes in the old economy so profound it is not likely to be allowed to happen because the social effects are impossible to clearly foretell.

5. In spite of relentless propaganda to the contrary, the American economy is tending strongly to require *less* knowledge and *less* intellectual ability of its employees, not more. Scientists and mathematicians currently exist in numbers far exceeding any global demand for them or any national demand—and that condition should grow much worse over the next decade, thanks to the hype of pedagogues and politicians. Schools *can* be restructured to teach children to develop intellect, resourcefulness and independence, but that would lead, in short order, to structural changes in the old economy so profound it is not likely to be allowed to happen because the social effects are impossible to clearly foretell.

6. The habits, drills and routines of government schooling sharply reduce a person's chances of possessing initiative or creativity—furthermore the mechanism of why this is so has been well understood for centuries.

7. Teachers are paid as specialists but they almost never have any real world experience in their specialties; indeed the low quality of their training has been a scandal for 80 years.

8. A substantial amount of testimony exists from highly regarded scientists like Richard Feynman, the recently deceased

Nobel laureate, or Albert Einstein and many others that scientific discovery is negatively related to the procedures of school science classes.

9. According to research published by Christopher Jencks, the famous sociologist, and others as well, the quality of school which any student attends is a very bad predictor of later success, financial, social or emotional; on the other hand the quality of family life is a very good predictor. That would seem to indicate a national family policy directly spending on the home, not the school.

10. Children learn fastest and easiest when very young; general intelligence has probably developed as far as it will by the age of four. Children are quite capable of reading and enjoying difficult material by that age and also capable of performing all the mathematical operations skillfully and with pleasure. Whether kids should do these things or not is a matter of philosophy or cultural tradition, not a course dictated by any scientific knowledge about the advisability of the practice.

11. There is a direct relationship between heavy doses of teaching and detachment from reality with subsequent flights into fantasy. Many students so oppressed lose their links with past and present, present and future. And the bond with "now" is substantially weakened.

12. Unknown to the public virtually all famous remedial programs have failed. Programs like Title I/Chapter I survive by the goodwill of political allies, not by results.

13. There is no credible evidence that racial mixing has any positive effect on student performance, but a large body of suggestive data is emerging that the confinement of children from subcultures with children of a dominant culture does harm to the weaker group.

14. Forced busing has accelerated the disintegration of minority neighborhoods without any visible academic benefit as tradeoff.

15. There is no reason to believe that any existing educational technology can significantly improve intellectual performance; on the contrary, to the extent that machines establish the goals and work schedules, ask the questions and monitor the performances, the already catastrophic passivity and indifference created by forced confinement schooling only increases.

16. There is no body of knowledge inaccessible to a motivated elementary student. The sequences of development we use are hardly the product of "science" but instead are legacies of unstable men like Pestalozzi and Froebel, and the military government of 19th century Prussia from which we imported them.

17. Delinquent behavior is a direct reaction to the structure of schooling. It is much worse than the press has reported because all urban school districts conspire to suppress its prevalence. Teachers who insist on justice on behalf of pupils and parents are most frequently intimidated into silence. Or dismissed.

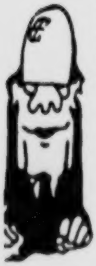
18. The rituals of schooling remove flexibility from the mind, that characteristic vital in adjusting to different situations. Schools strive for uniformity in a world increasingly less uniform.

19. Teacher-training courses are widely held in contempt by practicing teachers as well as by the general public because expensive research has consistently failed to provide guidance to best practice.

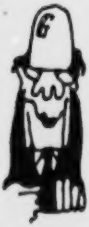
20. Schools create and maintain a caste system, separating children according to irrelevant parameters. Poor, working class, middle class and upper middle class kids are constantly made aware of alleged differences among themselves by the use of methods not called for by the task at hand.

21. Efforts to draw a child out of his culture or his social class has an immediate effect on his family relationships, friendships and the stability of his self-image.

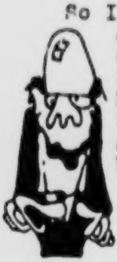
Well, there you have them: nine assumptions and twenty-one assertions I think can be documented well enough to call facts. How are we all as a society going to get to a better place in schools than the one we've gotten to at the moment? The only way I can see after spending 35 years in and around the institution (53 if I count my own time as inmate) is to put full choice squarely back into the hands of parents, let the marketplace redefine schooling—a job the special interests are incapable of—and encourage the development of as many styles of schooling as there are human dreams. Let people, not bureaucrats, work out their own destinies. That's what made us a great country in the first place.



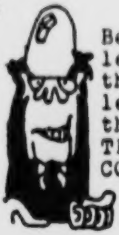
Ten forty-three. In exactly TWO MINUTES I'll ring the FIRST BELL and they'll all stand still!



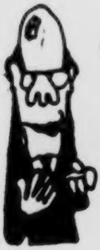
All, that is, except your potential DEVIATE! Your fledgling REBEL! Your incipient BOAT-ROCKER! THEY'LL try to move all right! THEY'LL have to learn the HARD way not to move!



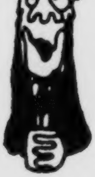
So I'll SCREAM at 'em and take their NAMES and give them FIVE DETENTIONS and EXTRA HOMEWORK! NEXT time they won't move after the first bell!



Because when they've learned not to question the FIRST BELL, they'll learn not to question their TEXTS! Their TEACHERS! Their COURSES! EXAMINATIONS!



They'll grow up to accept TAXES! HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS! INSURANCE! WAR! MEN ON THE MOON! LIQUOR! LAWS! POLITICAL SPEECHES! PARKING METERS! TELEVISION! FUNERALS!



Non-movement after the first bell is the backbone of Western Civilization!

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE NATIONAL SOCIALIZATION OF CHILDREN

by John Taylor Gatto

American institutions were born in a revolt from the tyranny of a centralized government symbolized in the British monarchy and mercantilism.

—E. Digby Baltzell, *The Philadelphia Gentleman*

In the past 75-100 years two ideas came insidiously into American political life in the shadow arena of public policy-making. One, the notion that common people thinking for themselves constitute a crisis of governance; the other, that local control of education must be stamped out and transferred through a series of progressively remoter masking layers to a small centralized élite of decision makers.

What élite would have the hubris[1] to want such control in a democracy? Or in a democratic republic! in which final choices are in the hands of an elected leadership, not a group of self-appointed ones?

Prior to 1850 such an élite—had it been felt necessary to convene one—would have been composed mostly of landed aristocracy and trading families; after 1890 it would have been a more professionalized leadership: university voices, foundation officials, mass media powers, members of key associations like NAM, CFR, FPA, CED, NAC, or BAC/BC/BR,[2] all representing various powerful interests. But as the twentieth century closes, the managing élite is seen to be visibly arising out of the same élite which runs the global corporations, speaking directly and in person, not from behind a screen of agencies.

Whether I'm right, half-right, or mostly wrong about the constituents of the élite policy layer is less important than that we all agree from *any* élite perspective, welcoming little voices at the policy table of the greater society—or to be in control of the minds of young people—simply cannot be tolerated. Democracy as a form of governance contradicts the scientific intentions of a centrally managed society. Under what kind of world-view would you have a "mass" decide important issues it can know nothing about?[3]

The only debate currently being entertained about governance among those who have reason to think they matter is whether society should function as a mechanism on the behavioral psychology model or as an ***organism*** made up of interacting hierarchically arranged systems, on the humanistic model. In either case democracy is considered either anachronistic or a dangerous fantasy—take your pick.

Tracking the origin of these ideas is tricky because at first glance they seem to arise out of the great scientific socialisms, out of Marx or Bismarck, perhaps Italian fascism, perhaps Franklin Roosevelt and the American experiment in welfare capitalism inherited from John Ruskin and Fabian socialism under the Webbs. But by holding your head under the cold water faucet for a while your head clears and without difficulty you see that the operating policies of gigantic international corporations can have no use at all for democracy either.

In an engineering sense, "the will of the people" just gets in the way of scientific decision-making. Not a good diagnosis for libertarians. Now this feeling was precisely the conclusion great titans of international capitalism reached at the turn of the century just passing. That's how we got welfare capitalism. Powerful industrialists and financiers like Andrew Carnegie, J.P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller and the like agreed to allow an exchange of relative comfort and security for a free hand wheeling and dealing without too much interference from public opinion. Many people think it was a good bargain but a fair hunk of liberty had to be surrendered, and from that time to now the children were confined to scientifically managed schools and were scientifically managed. It was enough to satisfy the élite leaders until about 1975. Since then they've wanted much more.

If we are to understand the well-orchestrated campaign underway to set national goals and standards, have national testing, national teaching licenses, curriculum, etc., we need to take a closer look at words like "democracy" and "liberty" and "the state, the family, the individual," because if nationalization of schooling comes about the definitions of all those things are going to change. We have near monopoly government schooling right now which has already twisted our historic notion of individual liberty; national pedagogy would make us a lot like Germany, which is, I think, its intended function, so it will be necessary in a while to talk about what that really means.

I'm aware that from a libertarian perspective the tyranny of mobs is seen as as great a danger as the tyranny of states, but from where I stand government is the worse threat because its incursions are written in laws, licensing, taxes, police powers and permanent bureaucracies—while mob passion is always a transient phenomenon. The brilliant dialectical balance struck in the U.S. was to allow the people's will free expression as a check on the power of government (as was dramatically illustrated in the street riots of the Vietnam period), and to allow the government power to check the tendency of public opinion to interfere with individual rights. In the push/pull of democracy vs. the state, space for persons, family, and small group sovereignty is kept open.

A vigorous democracy is our guarantee of liberty, but thinking for an instant of liberty as a philosophical value, you can see it isn't compatible with scientific management. Liberty is the right to follow your own star, to raise your children as you choose, whether the scientific managers of society like it or not. Liberty is that thing out of which independent personalities arise. No independent identity can survive too much close direction of its behavior by strangers; by loved ones and neighbors, sometimes, but by strangers the non-poisonous dose is strictly limited. Liberty can be seen as an evolutionary principle because with hundreds of millions of people free to plan their own lives the chances of serendipity are much, much greater than if only a few thousand, functioning as policy-makers, tell everyone else—and all the children—where to go and what to think.

It is the constant confrontation, the unwinnable war—between the collectivizing principle in government and the much different collectivizing principle in democracy which produces liberty for those who want it. In the stalemate of these forces, freedom escapes. Any serious government sabotage of democracy must be opposed with energy because it would threaten the dialectic which produces liberty.

2.

Three sharp demonstration of the power of democratic expression, the first in 1832, the second between 1885-1895, and the third from 1965-1973, determined what kind of public schools we got and set off the current drive to nationalize them. But ironically, school was *not* a response to democratic demand; just the opposite, it was the response of frightened and angered élites to democratic muscle flexings. I'll take them one at a time:

1) The need to colonize the minds of common children first took root in Boston and Philadelphia in 1832 because the tremendous power Jackson democracy unleashed was frightening to Unitarian Boston, and when Jackson broke Biddle's National Bank, became frightening to Quaker Philadelphia, too. A great many comfortable, complacent men woke up the day after, realizing the potential of the institution. They did not like what they saw.

An idea that had been around for centuries (since Plato, in fact), government compulsion schools, seemed to some as if it might nip democracy's career in the bud. If young minds could be massed, away from the sight of their parents and the working community, as Rousseau had advised in his book *Emile*, a cure for democracy was possible by inserting a kind of internal governor in children. This governor would direct them to listen closely to authorities other than mother or father or the local minister. Installed early enough this might check the potency of public opinion by the ancient Roman principle of divide and conquer. School would have others uses, of course, but keeping another Jackson out of office was a major motivation, or keeping him relatively powerless if a second Jackson did get in. Exactly one year after Jackson left office, the famous "Boston School Committee" which was fifteen years later to give our free country compulsion schooling, opened up shop under the direction of ambitious politician, Horace Mann[4], and fifteen years later Massachusetts was our first state with compulsion schooling.

This first phase of schooling, from 1852 until the 1890's, was pretty much a dud. The school year was only 12-20 weeks long, the dynamic structure of one-room schooling was superb at teaching literacy in word and number, argumentation, public performance, etc., at low costs, and there was more than enough flex in the system for liberty to survive.

2) But in the same way as the democratic expression under Jackson motivated schoolmakers to get compulsion laws passed, the populist immigrant uprising of the 1880's and 1890's demonstrated to the managers of society that people were not being sufficiently controlled by short-term one-room schooling, Chautauquas, and the other ministries of the day. Careful plans were now laid for a new form of longer confinement schooling, one which could be tied to the economy. It would no longer be so easy to get a *job* or a license if you hadn't learned your lessons. This particular turn of the screw was originally Andrew Carnegie's

idea. Just because you could argue a legal case like Lincoln, or build a fine building like Frank Lloyd Wright was no longer going to be sufficient. In the new system you would have to prove yourself to the state, on the state's terms. And no appeal from its decision.

And a huge, multi-tiered bureaucracy of management was set into place over school teachers in order to make the classroom teacher-proof; books were centrally approved and ordered—what once had been an individual decision; the community could no longer pick its own teachers, now the state licensed them. By 1930 schools had become teacher-proof, parent-proof, and thanks to a long school day and year, student-proof. This massive response to the democratic resistance to industrialization gave us the schools we had until about 1975.

3) Today we are faced with an even more radical centralization of state power hidden behind various proposals for the national socialization of schoolchildren, an initiative propelled by memories of a third populist revolt, one I'll talk about shortly. If it succeeds, we can expect the already stifling orthodoxy of government schooling, especially on the mostly bogus "gifted and talented" level, to become total. You can expect a lot of talk about "teaching the whole child" and "parents as teachers" and "multiculturalism" and "choice", but it will be baloney any way you slice it: the last two radical centralizations had their press agents, too.

In a national system the important goals, decisions, texts, methods, and personnel are displaced from local hands to invisible hands far away. Even in phase two schooling this happened to an extreme degree and the psychological effects of being "managed" are already all around us. Displaced decision-making tends to cause general apathy.

One striking example of this apathy directly resulted from the "great transformation" to a planned pedagogy/planned society at the beginning of the century and is still with us. Prior to 1880 about 80-88% of Americans eligible to vote voted; after 1930 about 25% of the eligible voters voted—a contingent over *twice* as large was now eligible in the later period because woman now had the franchise. But it did no good, the citizenry stopped voting and has remained dormant ever since. If my words puzzle you, remember that the percentage of vote tabulated is a ratio of *registered* voters, and as of 1992 only a bit more than half of the total pool bothered to register.

This political apathy is not an accident, but has been designed into the system for reasons we discussed earlier; in a management science model public participation in decision-making is not a desirable thing. If nationally socializing children increases their apathy—as I expect it to do—the future of democratic politics will not be a glorious one.

3.

In 1893 Frederick Jackson Turner, the historian, offered a theory that a mere accident of geography had given us working democracy. That accident was the presence of a moving frontier. By 1890 the frontier was gone. Turner implied we might expect democracy to erode without its help. Whatever the truth of the alleged connection, democracy has steadily eroded ever since and the centralization of schooling constitutes one of the principal causes. By 1965 the situation was as John Dewey had predicted in 1900, the business of the country was decided by large associations working in concert for the most part however nominally they disagreed. Virtually the entire national economy was tied with strings to schooling as Andrew Carnegie advocated. And by 1965 this intricately balanced, reciprocating social machine was involved in an undeclared war in southeast Asia. Effective Democratic access to war-making decisions was impossible. Here was the world of the future envisioned in 1890; thanks to centralized schooling and other forms of central regulation, scientific management prevailed.

Or so it seemed until the streets began to fill with nobodies shouting, unfathomable, "Hell no, I won't go!" and "Hey, hey, LBJ, How many kids did you kill today?" One presidency collapsed and another was grievously wounded; military loyalty, the bulwark of the republic was suddenly in question, and a disturbing number of front-line officers were shot to death from the rear by their own troops. "The people", that grand meaningless abstraction élites use to describe anyone outside the loop of decision-making, had come to the policy table uninvited.

Here was an event as significant as the first outbreak of popular democracy under Jackson in 1830, as significant as the great national strikes of the 1880's—soon after the war furor subsided in 1973, calls for a better, tighter system of national schooling began to be heard more often, from many different quarters. A campaign was being carefully orchestrated from the usual quarters: key foundation centers, the Business Roundtable, other important associations, the most important universities, and a powerful nucleus group in the mass media, to make a final end to local control, to more completely tie work to school training, performance and behavior, and to nationalize the goals, procedures, assessments, and personnel of schooling once and for all.

How could a nation founded only three lifetimes ago on the principle of a weak state and a strong society now have utterly reversed the founding formula? How have we gotten a huge and powerful state and an unhappy, disintegrating society in its place? I can ask the question but only partially answer it here, yet the part of the puzzle I have is a vital one: we are dealing with a crisis of democracy which has been provoked by the unacceptable power democracy represents to other centers of power. Government and governmental institutions like schools are used to order and regulate society rather than allowing the free market mechanisms of *un*-monitored reflection and choice to determine the social order and its regulations. What is happening is *profoundly* un-free, profoundly manipulative and profoundly destructive to our traditions of liberty.

... we are dealing with a crisis of democracy which has been provoked by the unacceptable power democracy represents to other centers of power.

An entire intellectual class has been subtly seduced into believing the planet is imperiled by the individuality and free choices of common people and this class has been enlisted to propagandize for a final end to freedom. A representative piece of evidence is found on the last page of Karl Polanyi's magnificent study of the political origins of our times [*The Great Transformation*]. As his book ends, Polanyi addresses the need to destroy common liberty to save the planet. He says "we must be resigned to the reality of the end of our liberty as we are resigned to the reality of death". The end of liberty is a necessary evil, but by redefining freedom as "a collective thing" the loss of liberty will not hurt so much. This redefining of root concepts to manipulate attitudes is not, of course, uncommon in these end-of-days times—all of us are familiar with the relentless attempts to redefine the word "family", or the destruction of the children in Waco, Texas by our government in order to save them—but it is something to watch out for, particularly in the language employed by the national socializers of schooling.

If my guess is correct, Polyani's redefinition of "liberty" requires, first, a massive assault of "democracy" because public will mobilized is strong enough to overturn the will of the state. And as I said at the beginning, the *impasse* between state power and public power is what creates liberty—for those who want it.

If you think of the people who do this as bad guys, you are lost—

School is the most effective tool ever devised to prevent individual will from forming and public will from coalescing. But it only works if its texts and procedures, goals and human relations, can be determined from afar. Centralized management in its turn requires that outside influences of students like families be weakened, that student loyalties be suborned by continual references to school/job linkages and an onrushing future, and that the bulk of the student population be dumbed down. This conjures up the most sinister images of conspiracy but it is *crucial* if you are to make use of these ideas to help yourself that you see the dumbing down as a simple management technique growing out of a philosophy of social order (and probably a theology of strict materialism). *If you think of the people who do this as bad guys you are lost;* indeed it's useless to see them as real human beings. Better to see them as mere machines programmed to perform a function; you can break the machine, sabotage it, or try to avoid it, but it is a suicidal waste of time to try to negotiate with it.

Dumbing kids down is essential not only for management reasons but increasingly it will become a political necessity because the centralized economy will provide less and less work of real substance. Thinking people unemployed, dispossessed, or given busy work are political dynamite. What has been done to the African-American population since about 1955 is going to have to be done to others if the present economic course—where all work is sucked up into immense government agencies, immense institutions, and gigantic global corporations—is to continue to its logical conclusion. One way to look at the international trade treaties, the de-industrialization of America, and the ongoing attempts to give the United Nations a permanent military presence is to see it as part of a strategy to place the power to change things beyond the reach of democratic citizenries; one way to look at the dumbing down of government compulsion schools is to place the power to change things, or even to *assemble effectively,* beyond the power of individuals and families.

4.

Two crazy ideas have been abroad for most of the twentieth century. One, dumbing children down so they are unable to use our democratic machinery and traditions to defend themselves against a managed society and find their way to a freer one; and two, eliminating local control of schooling goals and procedures allows involved families to be muzzled and replaced by the hired voices of social managers. As the century ends a sophisticated modification of this plan is going on. The global business strategy called "Management By Objectives" has appeared in pedagogical form as "Outcomes Based Education" in concert with a variety of "free-choice" plans which will nominally return control to localities. The *apparent* concession in "voucher", "tax credit" and "charter school" plans can be easily contraverted by imposing a template of state-mandated goals, requirements for testing/assessment, control on who is eligible to teach, requirements to purchase supplies from approved lists, and other soft-core sanctions of this type. Under a system of centralized management such as I've just described, the efficiency of central management—however invisible and low-key the new system makes it—would be vastly improved. The *feeling* of freedom and dignity would remove a great deal of friction from the school machine, dissent would be made to appear brutish ingratitude (or worse from the dissenter's point of view, a psychological impairment to be "adjusted"), and the costs of schooling would be certain to drop (because internal management of classrooms would replace expensive external, friction producing management).

The advantage to a philosophy of scientific social management of *dispersing* the present system is great enough that although the present system works fairly well (barring the occasional Vietnam rioting) I would expect to see versions of the newer, "freer" way thriving by 2005. But that advantage *only* exists if at least the degree of centralized direction existing today can be maintained. For that reason I can guarantee you that "choice" in whatever form will only come equipped with "goals, standards, assessments" and probably some extension of the licensing function.

The hopeful fact for a liberty-lover is that such a dispersed national system will be much easier to sabotage by local action than the present one is; the downside lies in the probability that individualized schools *will police themselves* even more rigidly and thoroughly than is presently possible in the adversarial system we have.

Make no mistake about it, both "choice" and "national schooling" of some type are coming because it is in the interest of the state to allow them soon (just as it is in state interests to appear at present to *resist* the pressures to liberalize the current system, to be properly deliberative about changing it, etc.)

5.

Is there any visible evidence that such anti-democratic motives are loose among the managers of society? Is this merely the fantasy of an old schoolteacher? Let me mention a few things casually. Once you begin to see the rules of the game the evidence is abundant:

In January of 1995 *Time* magazine ran a cover story ostensibly to protest the unwarranted reach talk show hosts have into the public mind. Under that surface argument a revealing sub-text played which I can paraphrase as this. "Too much democracy is in the worst interests of our national goals: the world is too complex to allow common people to shape the decisions of management".

Using our provisional theory that democratic outbursts always provoke antithetical attempts to foreclose democracy, I didn't have to look far to determine what put the bee in *Time 's* bonnet. It was the dramatic turnaround in the Fall, 1994 elections. Neither *Time* nor anyone who matters cared that one party's control replaced another's for at least two reasons:

1) Congress has lost most of its power in this century because it is too accessible to the democratic impulse. If you don't call giving up the constitutionally granted money power to the private banks of the Federal Reserve a loss of power, or giving up the war-making power in all but name, real losses of real power, then you

won't understand my reference. But in national decision-making, our legislative branch has been crippled badly.

2). In important national matters like bombing Iraq or surrendering national sovereignty to trade treaties like GATT and NAFTA the U.S. is virtually a one-party state; political labels mean little.

So how can I argue simultaneously that the elections didn't matter and that they did, too? Easy. What mattered was the shock sent through the world of spin-doctors that decisive public opinion can still be generated by voices outside the power-loop. In this case, whether the reason was the Christian Coalition or a national disgust at being managed matters less than that this was not supposed to be possible after an age of manufacturing consent. How can a properly dumbed down public slip its leash and sink its fangs into the trainer? Hence the *Time* cover story about the inadvisability of too much democracy—to take a sounding in troubled waters.

Now from this trivial example let me rush you to the big time. Twenty years ago an international policy élite called the Trilateral Commission sponsored a book called *The Crisis of Democracy*, published, I believe, in 1975 by New York University Press; it was widely read and discussed by policy-makers in this country and overseas. The book's thesis is that the world is suffering from a serious disease called "hyper-democracy", a sickness stemming from, you guessed it, too much political participation by common people.

International order, readers learned, was being threatened along with the progress of globalizing business. Common citizens, it seems, are *resisting* further surrender of their national identities and local allegiances. Well, how about that? Who the hell do they think they are?

The Trilateral prescription for this crisis of democracy consists of two sharp recommendations: 1) "a narrowing of the meaning of democracy;" and 2) "a forceful assertion of élite control". We've already talked a bit about redefining key words like "liberty" and "democracy", but it might be useful to consider for a minute what a "forceful assertion of élite control" would look like. Historically, if we stick to this country and the past hundred years or so of attempts (mostly successful) to nationally socialize children, we might think of Andrew Carnegie's private army of Pinkertons firing from armed barges at the steel strikers of Homestead, Pennsylvania as one, the assault on the miners' tent camps in Ludlow, Colorado by private gunmen paid by John D. Rockefeller II as another[4]—

and perhaps the execution of strikers at Ford's River Rouge plant in the 1930's, also by hired gunmen, a third. But all of these will have meaning only for students of American history.

Fortunately, recent events are rich in illustrations of forceful assertion of élite control as well. We might think of the public extermination of Branch Davidians by fire in Waco, Texas, the execution of an unarmed woman, Mrs. Randy Weaver, and her unarmed 14-year old son by FBI snipers in Idaho several years ago, to teach her husband and his supporters a lesson, or the most forceful illustration of all: the spectacular immolation of 100,000 retreating Iraqi peasants by igniting a gasoline-drenched sky above their heads—an event seen all over the world on television—as a model of forceful display.

But melodramatics aside, I hope the concern shown by *Time* and its anti-democracy story in 1995 and the Trilateral book, *Crisis of Democracy* in 1975 are enough to convince you that certain well-placed voices have been saying, and are saying, that lesser folk should keep their silly opinions to themselves. With only a slight effort we can track that identical attitude back to Vilfredo Pareto's *The Mind and Society*, which vas a "must read" among policy-makers during the second Franklin Roosevelt presidency. Pareto's scathing remarks on majority rule, equality, and the like are wonderful to read for their honesty. If Pareto is too esoteric an allusion, then we can find exactly the Trilateral position in Walter Lippman's influential book, *Public Opinion*, 1922, where Mr. Lippman suggests the public shouldn't have any opinions, or even back to Gaetano Mosca's brilliant study of 1896, *The Ruling Class: Elements of Political Science* which is thought to be the very book which convinced Teddy Roosevelt he needed a secret police force answerable to himself—in other words, the book which caused Roosevelt to establish the FBI, in defiance of Congress, by executive order.

6.

Have I ranged too far from the national socialization of children, windmilling my arms through the air, spraying obscure books in your direction, ranting about Carnegies, Fords, Rockefellers, the dead Weavers, crisped Iraqis and flame-broiled Davidians? I give up if you think I have. The major question of our lifetimes is whether or not in the teeth of forceful displays of élite power, a form of pernicious schooling worthy of George Orwell and a religion of management science which says in effect, "This is the best of all possible worlds—except we need more of it!", you and I can preserve the possibility of democracy.

Because if we can't, we can kiss our liberty goodbye, too. Both the managers of public policy and their flunkies in the academic world, the mass media, the great foundations (I mean the eleven that really count), and just as great "associations" like CFR, FPA, CED, NAC, *et al.*, have already written liberty off. Comfort and security are the two bribes they peddle to replace it, national schooling is the medicine your kid takes so being unfree won't hurt so much.

For any lingering skeptics in the crowd, let me present Mr. Checker Finn, a little fellow whose name appears everywhere these days, everywhere, that is, that big-time schooling is discussed. Don't worry if you never heard of him, in many ways he's just a nervous suit being fronted by certain business interests to float their vision of a well-schooled world as a trial balloon. But I find him interesting, not so much for his ideas, which are commonplace, but for his *attitude*—which I take to reflect the curious emptiness of his handlers. See for yourself: what follows will be from his masterpiece, a frightening book with the hysterical title, *We Must Take Charge*. This control freak's manual extends the notion of hyper-democracy to its logical limit. Listen:

> Why should Connecticut's educational objectives be different from Oregon's? Is there any sound rationale for big differences from one place to another? .... Everybody eats the same Big Macs, buys the same national newspapers, and lines up for the same movies and rock concerts. What has been missing up to now is the *will* to transform our *de facto* national curriculum into...a muscular curriculum ... aligned with specific goals and married to clear indicators of results.

7.

The model of governance which seeks to nationally socialize children first took shape in the Whig insurgency of the 1830's, and matured during the progressive movement of the late 19th century. This model was of foreign origin, imported out of the north German state of Prussia. Prussian genius rested on the compelling principle that the state was a fatherland, not a motherland, and that it had absolute godlike rights over each citizen; the state could not do wrong. School was seen as a factory for the production of state-approved children, some dumb, some average, some bright, and some far-seeing and insightful. How many of each type were produced was nobody's business but the state's.

This idea could be infinitely regressed, but its recent parentage begins with John Locke and Rousseau, who worked from the model of a child's consciousness as a blank slate, and a Swiss philosopher Helvetius, who refined the basic conception. The idea got loose in Prussia exactly at the moment that country was trying to rally from a crushing defeat by Napoleon.

Thirteen years after that defeat at Jena, in 1819, Prussia sprang a national system of forced schooling on the world designed to harness its human resources, along with a university system which dismissed good teaching as significant—replacing the teacher with the honored scholar who produced research for the state. Students existed to serve the research and to develop a scientific outlook among those who were to lead the common people. A later development of the Prussian mind was the famous behavioral psychology which has performed so destructive a role in public schooling for the past 50 years. It was a refinement of animal training which operated from the premise that human life was machinery to be programmed, a decisive variant on Locke's blank slate.

Behavioral psychology held out a promise of delivering mechanisms of mass behavioral control in the new factory schools of the early twentieth century, and the softer psychologies of Germany/Austria—from Freud through the later Gestaltists, Frankfurt School, etc.—promised a way to keep children content while they were being behaviorally conditioned. These softer psychologies owed their inspiration to the work of Heinrich Pestalozzi and Frederick Froebel. Pestalozzi was for all practical purposes the inventor of the elementary school curriculum and Froebel was the inventor of kindergarten. Both saw themselves as disciples of Rousseau and put practical exercises to his theories of childrearing.

The chaos these German psychological traditions, soft and hard, brought on twentieth century America is monumental, but here I want to limit your attention to just one aspect of the matter: what psychological theory of either sort suggests about human liberty.

German psychology taught that human nature was only an epiphenomenon, a by-product of the flight of atomic particles. Since there was neither Soul nor Spirit, there could be no absolute justification of morality. The way seen around this dilemma is through training in habits and politically approved attitudes also achieved through training which blends the conditioning of behavioral psychology with the "motivation" of gentler forms of persuasion—a classic stick and carrot approach.

... If you think there is any real difference between lifting up a defenseless child's skirts to see what lies beneath and ripping apart an atomic nucleus to see what happens then you and I would find much to disagree with, I'm certain.

It's not easy to see until someone points it out to you that a scientifically managed society requires its citizens to have morally relativistic attitudes. In the first place such a perspective offers the maximum shot at scientific discovery—think of it as a "no holds barred" attitude, an *unquenchable* curiosity which will not accept limits. Notice, too, that I have just defined the mind of a pornographer as well as the mind of a scientist. If you think there is any real difference between lifting up a defenseless child's skirts to see what lies beneath and ripping apart an atomic nucleus to see what happens then you and I would find much to disagree with, I'm certain.

But maximizing the possibility of discovery is not the only reason a scientific state has for requiring its citizenry to abandon absolute morality; a much more important reason is that the scientific state reserves the right to do what it wants, when it wants, in any way it wants. With those givens it's not a long stretch to see that moral attitudes deeply held are simply a major obstacle to getting the people to go where you want them to go. That isn't always true, of course, but even the potential it might happen is a prime nuisance. When Lyndon Johnson staged the night attack on the destroyer C. Turner Joy in order to plunge us into a war in Vietnam he was employing disinformation to overcome moral scruples, as Kennedy did in his attack on Cuba, Bush in his attack on Grenada, or FDR in his concealment of intelligence reports on the approaching Pearl Harbor attack. It lies in the fundamental nature of scientifically managed or pragmatic governments to find public morality inconvenient. I hope I haven't shocked you.

Hence the moral relativeness of German psychologies put a gleam in the eye of U.S. policy-makers toward the end of the nineteenth century. But how to effectively spread such attitudes in the face of family morality, religious morality, cultural morality, and traditional morality? Where would the vehicle be found to demoralize the common population? Can you guess? The nationalization of schooling will complete a process of conditioning the body politic of this country begun just about a hundred years ago by the great transformation of successful one-room schools and local governance into factory schools with a psychological curriculum scientifically managed by trained agents of the state.

Throughout the academic development of 19th century America, this Germanic imagination worked to achieve "a new type of man drawn on a new theory of life". It was recognized the major obstacles would be three: Mother, Home, and Self. Prussian genius, working through its famous "common schools" and "kindergartens," found a brilliant method to weaken the loyalty to all three: instead of severe discipline which was in use in every other part of national life, for the common children there would be love and laughter, bright colors, funny faces, balloons, "cooperative learnings" and a strict curtailment of difficult reading and thinking. Home would be the place that imposed hard work and strict duties, school would be a place for fun, a world for children *better* than home, with teachers smarter and nicer than mother—a place where the first buds of originality and individuality could be sanded down into the standards of collective response imposed by strangers. And when the state stepped in to issue orders much later when the children were almost grown, how would any of them know how to resist!?

Horace Mann fell in love with the idea when he saw it firsthand. His awe at its profundity fairly jumps from the pages of his Seventh Report to the Boston School Committee in 1844. Give us Prussian schools! he cries. *One year later* the King of Prussia was officially invited by the U.S. and Canadian governments to settle the boundary between our countries in the northwest. Prussia's crushing victory over France in 1871, its prosperity built on a very thin resource base, and the distinction of its scientists, all contributed to underline how much profit lay in a plan of national child socialization. In 1875, the ambitious Asian state of Japan took Prussia's constitution for its own. Like Whig politician Horace Mann those Japanese militarists fell in love with Prussia's use of children as implements—and gave rise to the use of a strange verb hardly heard anywhere else but in discussions of school matters where "to implement" is a daily invocation

In the early twentieth century the German mechanical outlook on human life entered American industry and the workplace in a big way. At the 1905 NEA convention, Frank Vanderlip, vice-president of the National City Bank of New York told the assembled school administrators and teachers, "Germany's success can be encompassed in a single word—schoolmaster." By 1910 Taylor's scheme of "scientific management" swept America like a prairie fire. Industry, government, school, even religious missionary efforts celebrated scientific management as a secular gospel. Suffice it to say the nuts and bolts of this idea were brought back to America from Germany by thousands and thousands of prominent young men who had traveled there in search of the world's only PhD degree at that time.

America's industrial tycoons demanded their workers be rigorously socialized in the new system right along with their nominal bosses, the mid-level executive class who was subjected to German discipline, too. It was not sufficient to merely perform well, minds and hearts had to be regulated, too. If you ever read George Orwell now you know why Winston Smith had to be made to love Big Brother; in a mind control system it isn't sufficient simply to do away with your enemies.

Before mid-century American courts were ruling that only what can be scientifically demonstrated is true. That is of course the bedrock philosophical underpinning of scientific positivism, and the first principle taught in behavioral psychology. Justice Bork recently ruled in the U.S. Appellate Court that "no system of moral or ethical values has any objective or intrinsic value of its own." If you disagree, you're not an American judge, at least not one going places.

The populist right, an entity regularly miscalled the religious right, has correctly traced the elastic morality of children to government schooling, but it has erroneously concluded that liberals, communists, new-agers, anti-Christians, and immoralists are behind this development. Certainly schools are full of plenty of these groups but none ever had the power to dominate this very expensive institution of the state. The moral relativity characteristic of public school products is, as I've said, a necessary precondition for professional social engineers to enjoy success in their projects. And scientific management was established in schools by the complete victory of the international mega-corporations in the first decades of the twentieth century.

This total victory over smaller manufacturers and over the economy of independent livelihoods (nearly 50% of all Americans were farmers in 1900!) was consolidated by increasing control over the minds of the young. Moral relativity is the core curriculum of government schooling. It pays the bills. This explains an otherwise baffling mystery! Why the great private foundations of Carnegie, Rockefeller, Ford, and others have relentlessly underwritten socialist projects for this entire century, or since their founding.

By 1953 a congressional commission was onto the game; its official title: "The Special Committee to Investigate Tax Exempt Foundations". I'll quote a bit of the Committee's conclusions from the book, *Foundations: Their Power and Influence* written by the general counsel of the body, René Wormser:

> There is much evidence that to a substantial degree foundations have been the directors of education in the United States .... In these Rockefeller,- Ford-, and Carnegie-established vineyards work many of the principal characters in the story of the suborning of American education. Foundations nurture academic advocates of upsetting the American system and supplanting it with a Socialistic state.

It's a wonderfully disturbing read, this book, and Mr. Wormser as a lawyer has assembled a grim pile of facts about the financing of many school projects aimed at collectivizing the society. Once you have this odd doorway opened for you the strangest sights can be glimpsed inside.

For instance, in 1915 Mr. Carnegie and Mr. Rockefeller spent more money on education and welfare than all efforts of the government combined. And on many other fronts Mr. Carnegie and his fellow moguls were showing themselves to be much more than successful industrialists. In 1914 Carnegie, for instance, took over the controlling group of the Federal Council of Churches by extending very heavy subsidies; what was difficult to explain is why this was done by a man whose contempt for churches was legendary. In 1918 Carnegie endowed a meeting in London of the American Historical Association, where an agreement was made to rewrite American history. Beatrice Webb (whose Fabian projects she declined to accept his underwriting for) called him "a reptile".

On July 4, 1919 *the London Times* carried a detailed account of the "efficient propaganda" carried on by agents of Mr. Carnegie in the U.S, men "trained in the arts of swaying public opinion". Among the details cited is this gem which I'll hope you keep in mind when you're reading the next major school undertaking of the Carnegie foundations:

> ... propaganda to mobilize the press, the Church, the stage and cinema, the whole educational system, the universities, public and high schools, primary schools. Histories and textbooks will be revised. New books will be added, particularly in the primary school."

Who can explain such an ambitiously comprehensive propagandizing as an attempt to enhance what normal people would call "democracy"? And yet one of Carnegie's later written works, and a big one, was called *Triumphant Democracy,* spelling out the majestic achievements of the American system. What kind of democracy is it that inserts ideas in unsuspecting minds? That strikes me as a pornographer's idea of a good joke, a pornographer's democracy. The same issue of the same paper carries a signed article by Owen Wister, one of the Carnegie propagandists, who states, "A movement to correct the schoolbooks of the United States has been started and it will go on."

You'll have noticed that in the above outline of a propaganda network to be assembled by the Carnegie endowments, no hint is given toward what *end* this is being done.

I'll close this long reflection on the national socialization of children by extending two clues about a destination for all this effort, some utopia the schools will be used to bring about. Remember, these are only hunches:

The March, 1925 issue of *Saturday Evening Post* carries an article, by a prominent Carnegie endowment official stating, "American labor will have to be reduced to the status of European labor" in order to bring about a better world, to level the playing field. And ten years later, *the New York American* newspaper carried a report of what it called "a secret Carnegie Endowment Conference" at the Westchester Country Club in Harrison, New York at which twenty-nine invited organizations agreed to authorize a nationwide radio campaign to commit the U.S. to a policy of internationalism and to present vigorous counter-action against those who oppose the country's entrance into the League of Nations. The date was December 19, 1915.

8.

Children have been nationally socialized in graduated stages already in this century; now it would appear someone is trying very-hard to internationally socialize them. I want to wrap this up by talking about some of the great societies of this century which would not have been possible without a national system of schooling.

Let's begin with the Japanese empire which overran Asia. Japan's Prussianized school system gave the empire's élite military leadership just that extra measure of discipline it needed to efficiently go to war. Keep in mind that in national schooling a teaching staff is required to function as agents of the state, transmitting legends and lore the State permits and no other. Student bodies are tested and labeled to be used as raw material for a planned economy; dissidents, however talented, are stigmatized through permanent records and public humiliation. Is it any wonder China subsequently trained its best public school students to spy on their own parents as if to underline to the family who really owned the children's loyalty?

Chairman Mao reversed customary authority relationships between old and young, using students to impose State-generated social changes directly on a community of Chinese adults during the well-known "Red Guard" period. And only a short time after Mao we find it tried in the U.S. when American courts authorize child access to condoms and abortion without knowledge or prior consent of parents. Here was a subtle way to out-Mao Mao, to bypass the stumbling block of family and place the baton of leadership into youthful hands.

In 1922 a schoolteacher came to power in Italy. Education was immediately put under strict state control. Its aim was absolute organizational discipline of behavior and thinking. Up until recently our own system of schooling was closer to Mussolini's fascist model than any of the more serious varieties of mind control. But after 1960 there were clear indications directors of American schooling were looking to follow the example of 20th century Germany, heir to Prussian schooling, and the Soviet Union, another legatee of Prussia once removed.

Both National Socialist Germany and Soviet Russia employed elaborate strategies of student indoctrination, ones which aimed at total ideological transformation. They stressed ladders of absolute authority, ladders of obedience, and utter subservience to a group standard. Alfred Rosenberg, the party philosopher, wrote that the task of our century was "to create a new type of man out of a new myth of life". Meanwhile on our side of the Atlantic John Dewey and his associates said the same thing in almost the same words. Uncanny. Jane Addams, a close friend of Dewey and directress of the famous Chicago social settlement Hull House put the case for national schooling this way:

> The individual must be subordinated to the larger social group, The Individual has little importance. The nation is moving from an era of individualism to one of collective associations. The concept of social control through mass psychology is a necessity. The goal is the construction of a universal village that will obtain an organic control over all life. The play impulse in children, carefully regulated and channeled, will breed a group mind, and prove an important substitute for police action.

Strong stuff, huh? Old Jane Addams! "The play impulse in children carefully regulated and channeled will breed a group mind"? "Control through mass psychology", "control over all life", "construction of a universal village". And that was 1935; think how much progress her team has made in 60 years.

But meanwhile back in Germany the Hitler gang was practicing what Jane Addams preached. Thanks to national schooling academic requirements were deliberately weakened just as they had been in Bismarck's day; psychological material was infused throughout the curriculum to replace intellectual material. Great stress was placed on schooling as a preparation for work, not to learn to think. As pragmatism waxed, hard thinking waned. And in Germany the ultimate masterpiece of national education occurred: a highly-educated population which could gas Jews efficiently and at the same time show genuine delight in poetry and music. The great Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer said the second world war was the inevitable result of a fine-quality, universal, national compulsion schooling.

The recent collapse of the Soviets has given us a close look at that Russian state schooling lavishly praised by John Dewey and the Fabian Socialists during the 1930's. Nothing in Russia worked except its weaponry. One-sixth of the land area is dangerously polluted with chemical and radioactive toxins, the average resident has 88 square feet of living space, 17% of the male population is alcoholic, standing in bread lines occupies 40 full working days a year even though the former Soviet is the world's largest grain producer. But popular contentment was never a state goal of the Soviets; discontent could be handled by surveillance and control technology. Or so the socio-technicians thought until the whole thing came apart.

9.

About a decade ago a Pennsylvania woman named Anita Hoge brought a legal complaint against the State of Pennsylvania for violation of federal law. She complained the state education department was forcing a psychological test on children, eliciting personal and sensitive information, then scoring this data against a secret state standard of political correctness. The State of Pennsylvania was sitting in judgment on attitudes, values, beliefs and opinions behind the curtain. Mrs. Hoge alleged that it was the intention of Pennsylvania to change the way children viewed right and wrong without informing children this was the purpose or obtaining consent from their parents.

Mrs. Hoge's complaint was upheld by a federal investigation. Pennsylvania promised to stop. But infractions continue in Pennsylvania as they do all over the country. No really effective counter-action against the powerful covert machinery in place to nationally socialize children is possible without general awareness of what really is going on, who is making it happen, and for what end.

In the November 1973 *Harvard Education Review*, Hillary Rodham, not yet Mrs. Clinton, wrote that she deplored the "obsolete belief" that families are private. Or that they have the right to control the upbringing of their children. In a 1992 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*, Christopher Lasch wrote that Mrs. Clinton regards family as a retrograde institution. It is the family who holds children back, the state which sets them free.

What can it mean in relation to democracy or the greater value, liberty, that some huge force seeks to centralize the school enterprise through schemes and strategies conducted outside public oversight? What does it suggest that an unelected élite can drive

North America in radical new directions without public debate or approval? I think it means that Ross Perot was right. They've taken our country and our children away from us and we're going to have to take them back.

The whole record of human history on Planet Earth nowhere shows the highest wisdom vested in the machinery of states; nothing in the historical record warrants much hope that state power will not be abused in exactly the magnitude with which states hold sway over the spirits of their citizenry. Small states cannot be trusted very far: witness Haiti's dismal record, or Guatemala's, or Albania's; medium-size states even less: witness Argentina and Romania; and large states not at all: witness China, Russia, Indonesia, Japan, Germany. The last time I looked the state I live in myself was a whopper.

It seems to me that the traditional Christian view of human nature has proven itself to be more objective than the humanist view, at least as it expresses itself through the actions of governments. Human nature is flawed, human organizations (except for the Albany Free School) [*yay, John! ed.*] corrupt. It would be better to give none of them absolute power—which is what national schooling schemes are the avenue toward. With this record of human organization, imagine how far your family would be able to trust a world-state, or a well-armed United Nations.

Just a few years after *Crisis of Democracy* was published *Forbes Magazine*, which bills itself as "the capitalist tool" pleasantly shocked me by publishing a truly radical attack on the kind of public schooling which I've argued just now was really the product of global capitalists, who blamed it on every other group under the sun while smiling quietly to themselves.

That *Forbes* allowed such a gauntlet to be thrown is a wonderfully hopeful clue that class warfare is another illusion. Perhaps we are not facing a monster at all but only a colossal mistake. Listen to what *Forbes* had to say:

> The techniques of brainwashing developed in totalitarian countries are routinely used in psychological conditioning programs imposed on school children. These include emotional shock and desensitization, psychological isolation from sources of support, stripping away defenses, manipulative cross-examination of the individual's underlying moral values, and inducing acceptance of alternative values by psychological rather than rational means. These

> techniques are not confined to separate courses or programs ... they are not isolated idiosyncracies of particular teachers. They are products of numerous books and other educational material in programs packaged by organizations that sell such curricula to administrators and teach the techniques to teachers. Some packages even include instructions on how to deal with parents and others who object. Stripping away psychological defenses can be done through assignments to keep diaries to be discussed in group sessions, and through role-playing assignments, both techniques used in the original brain-washing programs in China under Mao.

Thus is the road to the national socialization of children being paved. It is a road running through every state's Department of Education these days, filled with buses carrying children to a collective destiny planned by experts without names. And it will continue to happen until each one of you begins to ask what your country wants to nationalize the education of children *for*. And says NO to it, and NO, and NO, and NO.

FOOTNOTES

1. Hubris: chutzpah, arrogance, swelled heads, megalomania, take your pick.

2. For purposes of this argument the names behind these initials are irrelevant with one possible exception: the Business *Advisory* Council (BAC) became the Business Council (BC) in the 60's and in the 80's the Business Roundtable (BR), a progression from humility to grandiosity in just 100 years.

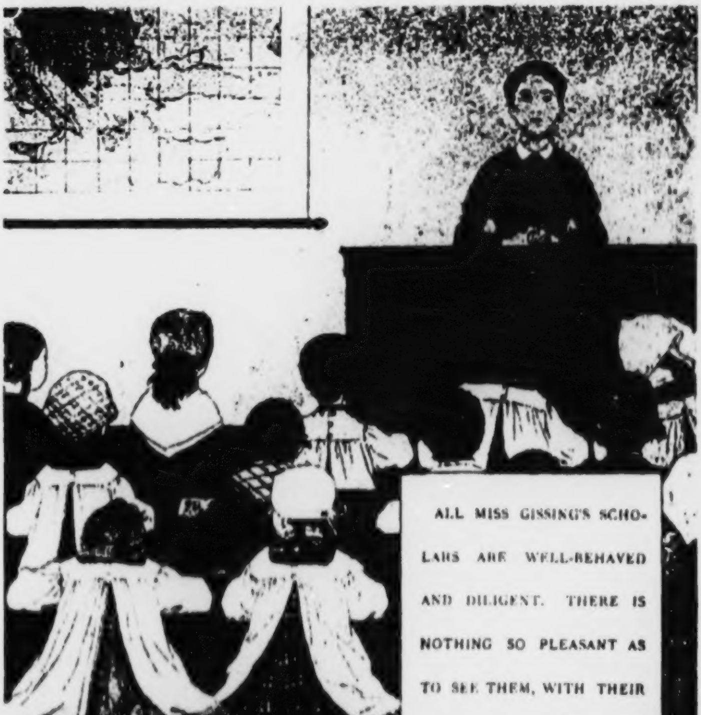
3. Under the world-view that "a mass" does not exist, but is an illusion of the manufacturing mind.

4. Mann was a son-in-law to the famous Peabody family, in the congregation of legendary Unitarian William Ellery Channing. A little later Peabodies went partners with young J. P. Morgan, and after the Civil War became the main proselytizers for compulsion school in the South. Mann's sister-in-law, Elizabeth, was a principal mover in American education.

5. On April 20th, 1914 a private army representing the interests of John T. Rockefeller II charged through tent camps containing strikers against the Rockefeller owned Colorado coal and iron mines in armored cars raking the tents with machine-gun fire, and

burning one camp to the ground with coal oil. 19 men, women and children were killed. No one was ever prosecuted for the killings.

John Taylor Gatto (235 West 76th Street, New York, New York 10023) taught for thirty years in public school. In 1991 he was New York State Teacher of the Year. His three books are DUMBING US DOWN *(1992)*, THE EXHAUSTED SCHOOL *(1993) and* THE EMPTY CHILD *(forthcoming from Simon & Schuster).*



ALL MISS GISSING'S SCHOLARS ARE WELL-BEHAVED AND DILIGENT. THERE IS NOTHING SO PLEASANT AS TO SEE THEM, WITH THEIR LITTLE STIFF BODIES AND THEIR HEADS SO ERECT

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THE THERAPEUTIC SCHOOL
by Chris Mercogliano

Because we appear as such a motley crew, always with at least a few kids looking a little bit wilder than most, people often ask if we are some kind of special school, for, (you know), "special" (problem) children. Of course, I always answer, "Yes!" because damn it, all children are special, and all children have problems. We all have problems for that matter; that's just the nature of the beast.

Actually, we are not a school that is specially designed for anyone. Year by year we simply take on, with little fanfare, whoever happens to show up. And God just always seems to know who needs us the most. Since we are the only non-conventional and affordable alternative to the public and parochial greater detail elsewhere, is an assembling and reassembling of people—not policies, or ideologies, or buildings. Communities consist of relationships among people, and people—with all their quirks and idiosyncrasies—make up communities, each with their own unique structure and identity. Everything else is secondary, or even tertiary, if not irrelevant altogether.

So what does it mean, "therapeutic school?" It occurs to me that this is a very tricky notion. Mary, our founder, often says to people that the Free School is like a Rorschach Test, meaning that whatever someone experiences in our school is simply an outward, concretized manifestation of the inner rumblings in that person's psyche. In other words, if one has preconceived ideas about school, or about life, for that matter, then sooner or later one will get reality to bear them out in our school. For this reason, I always tell prospective parents, and often their kids, that if they are coming to us because of problems in the previous school, they can be sure that the very same problems will crop up in our school as well, in spite of the fact that we are so different. And we intend it to be this way, which is one important reason why there are so few fixed rules and policies and why the structure of the school is free to evolve as needed to meet changing circumstances. One of the things that tends to separate us from other schools is the way we follow problems to their true and hopefully lasting solutions, rather than temporizing with standardized responses and formulaic "discipline" all of the time, as most schools do.

Visitors to our school frequently comment on how "unstructured" we seem to be. What I am gradually coming to understand is that here the participants themselves are the structure. A true community, a concept I explore in much greater detail elsewhere, is an assembling and reassembling of people—not policies, or ideologies, or buildings. Communities consist of relationships among people, and people—with all their quirks and idiosyncrasies—make up communities, each with their own unique structure and identity. Everything else is secondary, or even tertiary, if not irrelevant altogether.

In the absence of a great many prescriptions and prohibitions, and in the presence of a good deal of spontaneity, "shit happens" on a regular basis at the Free School. I am purposefully borrowing that recently popular scatological expression from a bumper sticker that swept the nation for a time. This, I think, is where the idea of therapy comes in, and where, as I said, we part company with a great many other schools. Just as a good therapist would do, we encourage and invite the inner rumblings of the psyche "to come up." Then we work together, or struggle alone as the case may be, to take the drama all the way through to its logical completion, though the logic I'm speaking of here is of the inner kind. This is not a revolutionary idea. Getting away from all the psychotherapeutic lingo, it's simply called learning from your own mistakes; which many would argue is the only way true learning occurs anyway. When we take on kids with serious problems, they usually take full advantage of the available freedom, setting into motion a highly accelerated and certainly imaginative course of study based entirely on personal trial and error.

You might ask, "So what about the other kids, the ones who don't want to raise hell all the time?" Ah, this is another very tricky question. First of all, I firmly believe that it is important, even at quite a young age, for kids to learn to relate to and deal with all sorts of people. That's how they explore the limits of their own personal power and learn who to trust, and who not to trust; when to ask for help and when to go it on their own, and when to fight and when to flee (all of this belonging to an area of human experience sometimes referred to as "the politics of experience"). I have also discussed elsewhere the many tools and procedures available to our kids which enable them to deal safely and nonabusively with one another. When one of our "troubled" kids, having seen whatever pattern they happened to see in their ink blots of daily school life, stirs up the pot at school, we view it as an opportunity for the whole community to learn something about themselves.

I received an important lesson on this subject a number of years ago, when a couple of other men and I took a group of our more unhappy Free School boys with us to a weekend "men's council" held on the ancestral land of a quite elderly clan mother of the Seneca Nation in western New York State. During the course of the weekend, one of our boys—who suffered from occasional volcanic rages—got into it with one of the local boys, eventually going after him with a very sharp pocket knife. Fortunately, a couple of men were nearby enough to disarm Peter before anyone was hurt. The men presiding over the council, a mix of Native Americans and non-Native Americans, were at a loss as how best to respond to this disturbance to the peace of the council. The mutually agreed upon taboo against violence clearly had been broken. Should the boy be punished or sent home? The men from the Free School were advocates for having the whole group of boys sit down together and talk out the entire event, which they all, as it turns out, had a part in. The only problem was that our boy flatly refused. He was still too angry, ashamed and frightened by the power of his own reaction.

Finally, one of the council leaders, the one who had been placed in charge of the kids, decided to consult with Grandmother Twylah, as we called her, who was not actively participating in the council, but at whose invitation we were all there. That proved to be a very wise decision. Grandmother Twylah insisted on speaking to Peter immediately, and I ended up with the dubious honor of nearly dragging a very frightened boy to her sitting room. She instantly melted Peter, whom she had never seen before, with a smile of total acceptance. She told him that she sensed that he had had a problem controlling his temper before, and he nodded his head solemnly. She asked him if he knew that some of the men were suggesting that he be sent home, but that she had said absolutely not. She told Peter that she knew that he had come to her land that weekend just so that this very problem could arise and so that Peter would have the opportunity to begin to learn to deal with the force of his own anger. The old clan mother explained to us both that in the Seneca tradition, children are not punished for their wrongdoings because each contains a lesson to be learned. To this day I have posted on my wall Grandmother Twylah's *Ten Lessons for Being Human*. The first one is that life is nothing but a series of lessons; the second is that we repeat each lesson until it is learned; and the third is that when one lesson is learned, it is immediately replaced by another one. You get the idea after that.

At the end of her talk with Peter, Grandmother Twylah asked him if he would be willing to bury his knife under one of the old trees on her property, an act that would signal his willingness literally to begin learning to "bury the hatchet" when he found his rage being triggered. The pocket knife was a recent birthday gift to Peter and he loved it dearly, and so this was no easy decision for him to make. He thought for a long, silent moment before agreeing to do it. Peter was not the same ten-year-old boy when he arrived back home that Sunday evening, and today he is a tall, responsible, and even-tempered sixteen-year-old, and one of the most valued counselors at the overnight camp where he now spends his summers.

What about when the actions of one individual child begin to pull down the rest of the group? A.S. Neill, founder of Summerhill School in England back in the 1920's, addressed this sort of question by differentiating between freedom and license. Freedom, according to Neill carries along with it the responsibility for one's impact on others. For example, one is never "free" to shout, "FIRE!" in a crowded theater. That would be an obvious example of license. At the Free School, we continually walk a very fine line in terms of how much leeway to give an unhappy child to work out his kinks and knots. It is a fact that because our school is so much an intimate, living community, when one person is suffering, everyone else inevitably suffers as well, to one extent or another.

Well, then at what point does it just become plain unfair to the other kids? On certain rare occasions—I can remember two examples in twenty-one years—the kids themselves settled the matter by voting a chronic antagonist out of the school. This drastic action was taken only after repeated warnings and last chances failed to bring about any real change. I can think of three other instances when the teachers got together and decided that it was time for a troublesome student to leave against his will. In the majority of cases where it just hasn't worked out, kids have ended up making their own, I think, necessary decisions to return to the "safety" and predictability of the rule-bound, heavily supervised conventional schools. They somehow sensed inside themselves that they had moved as far as they were capable of moving at that time, and I suspect that they also were picking up on their parent(s)' mixed feelings about their attending the Free School as well. Unfortu-

Our gang

nately, this type of parental ambivalence freezes a child's willingness to experiment with new behaviors and ways of interacting with other people. At any rate, I make a point of following up on each and every one of the kids who don't stay on with us, and they all seem to manage to come 'round right, usually more sooner than later.

All this having been said, we haven't won any popularity contests with our insistence on including troubled kids. One year not too long ago a respected area psychotherapist who, ironically (from my point of view), specialized in helping Viet Nam War veterans suffering from post traumatic stress syndrome, sent his young son down to visit because he was dissatisfied with their uptown public school. We had two disturbing older boys in the school that year and the therapist ultimately elected not to send his son because of his concern over the level of crisis that he felt he was observing in the school at the time. It's true that there was a lot of uproar being generated by those boys in particular, and I certainly didn't fault that father for his decision. Nevertheless, if I had it to do all over again, I still wouldn't throw the two troublemakers out. Both badly needed us, both later were able to transition successfully back into more conventional schooling situations, and both are now doing very well indeed.

One of the boys, whose name I won't use for obvious reasons, was sent to us because he was that kind of kid who chronically invites the abuse of the entire class in the typical public school environment where there is so often a reservoir of pent-up hostility and frustration on hand. He was large and gawky and very used to playing the role of what I call "kick-me." To make matters worse, his father had serious paranoid schizophrenic tendencies; and furthermore, there was a relatively mild form of sexual abuse slowly being transmitted down the line of six siblings, with our boy being smack in the middle of it all. To make matters worse for us, he was the largest kid in the school, and prone to expressing his anger with definite sexual overtones toward anyone female. And then, to top it all off, he had a history of academic failure and now had no apparent interest in learning or doing much of anything. Free at last, our boy simply chose to sit around all day and bug other kids, both for the sport and for the attention it gained him. And then, one day, the Lord who works in such mysterious ways sent us an old eight-track tape player with a big box of working tapes, all from the sixties and seventies when the boy's father was a real music-loving young, died-in-the-wool hippy. Now, our boy sat around on his somewhat overweight derrière and listened to music all day long—a definite step in the right direction since at least he stopped being such a general nuisance. Still, I was worried about him because he was already thirteen, years behind academically, and very depressed. Getting him to do anything other than play his tapes was like trying to move a glacial New England boulder with a lever made of Styrofoam. All was business as usual until he got it in his eternally earphoned head to hold a dance at the school, with you-know-who as the DJ.

Lo and behold, the dance was a great success, with more to follow, and suddenly this budding teenager had a standing with his fellow students that he had never before had in his life. At some point along the way, it occurred to me to ask him if he might want to apprentice with a professional radio disc jockey if I could find one (anything to get him moving and out of the building!) His face lit up at the idea, and miraculously, I was able to find a student at a local college radio station who was willing to take on an eager, but totally inexperienced learner. He had him on the air the first day! Our young apprentice went on to earn his FCC license and then to start his own radio station on the block in his neighborhood, all within three months of his debut!

Eventually, our boy outgrew the Free School in more ways than one and returned to his local public junior/senior high school, a move which was entirely of his own creation, since neither his parents nor I believed that he was ready to make the transition back to the abysmal world of failure and abuse from whence he had come. What actually happened was that one day, entirely unannounced of course, he managed to persuade his aunt to take him to visit the public school nearest his home. While there, he further convinced her to enroll him on the spot, with the aunt claiming that she was his legal guardian! No one was more surprised than me when I received a phone call from his new principal the next day asking for his school records and if I could tell him a little more about his unusual new student. You can imagine what my next phone call—with his mother who still knew nothing about any of this—was like.

To complete this very abridged version of the story, his mother and I agreed that there wasn't much else to do at that point but respect her son's determination to escape from freedom. Within two weeks of his cleverly orchestrated "transfer," I learned that he had already started a school radio station and that the principal had him "on the air" every morning broadcasting from his office before the morning announcements! What a turn-around! He's apparently keeping up academically now, is beginning to have girl friends, and is generally turning out to be a very "normal" teenager.

John was the other boy that year that kept things livelier than they might otherwise have been. He had been adopted at the age of three after having been taken away from his mother by the local child protection people due to extreme neglect. This was in an extremely isolated area in upstate New York where they lived in Appalachia-like poverty. John's young mother sometimes worked as a prostitute in order to get by and she frequently left her little boy alone to fend for himself for long periods of time. John's new family was troubled as well. His adopted father was a combat veteran of the Second World War already in his sixties, and was disabled, alcoholic, and still suffering, I think, from untreated Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. To top it all off, he had a slow-growing cancer, and so John was often preoccupied with fears about his new dad dying. John's adopted mother, a sensitive, quiet, and insecure woman, was a full generation younger than her husband, and finally left him a couple of years after the adoption because of his drunken abusiveness, taking John with her.

In school, John's stock in trade was somewhat similar to his classmate, the DJ's. The only way that he seemed to be able to get at his buried grief, anger and despair—so understandable in light of his origins—was to play out a victim scenario, inviting his classmates to tease him and rough him up, all the while adamantly refusing to stick up for himself. He would then spend long periods of time off by himself, feeling abused and neglected—an obvious reenactment of his actual predicament in early childhood. Just the other day, a reporter from a local newspaper spent the day with us, working on a feature-length profile of the school, and near the end of his visit, he shared a very astute observation with me, one that I'd never heard put quite that way before.

He asked if I had noticed how in most classrooms in most schools, there are always at least a couple of kids who are loners, who often seem depressed or withdrawn, or who are in some way "out of it." I nodded my head. This thoughtful journalist then went on to say that he quite taken by the fact that he hadn't seen a single child all day fitting that pattern. All the children in the Free School, he was realizing, seemed to be "in the flow." All seemed to him to be always actively engaged in something, whether alone, in pairs or in small groups. No one appeared to be left out, and he wondered why I thought that was so. I answered that we place a great deal of value and attention on precisely that level of experience, and that we in some ways give it a higher priority than purely academic or other more mental forms of learning. Furthermore, I told him, the kids care so deeply about each other that it's usually not O.K. with them when someone's pain is being ignored—either by themselves or by others. Perhaps this statement could form the basis for a wonderfully unrefined, albeit "therapeutic" definition of "community," a term rendered nearly useless by constant over- and mis-use.

Our kids will inevitably find ways to draw each other out, much the same way that applying a hot compress to a boil slowly brings the trapped pus up to the surface, speeding up the healing process. Their assorted techniques for treating emotional wounds don't follow adult logic and instead are mysteriously intuitive. They often involve conflict and are rich in paradox. John's "abusers" finally stood the situation on its head by calling council meetings on him because he so consistently refused to defend himself. Riding the horse in precisely the direction it was going anyway, they ultimately, after all their caring pleas and exhortations had failed, voted in a motion that John had to sit alone—for as long as it took—until he called his own council meeting and got to work on changing his self-abasing pattern of behavior.

Stealing a line from one of my favorite modern Protestant hymns, "Wise hearts find truth in paradox." Amen, I say to that.

The kids' ploy worked like a charm, just as I'm sure they instinctively knew that it would. After two very stubborn days, John finally became so enraged at *having* to be isolated that he demanded his own meeting at which he gave his "persecutors" hell, and then pledged to stick up for himself from there forward. And that was a promise that he kept. Soon after this breakthrough which was largely engineered by his peers, out of the blue one day, John decided to write down his life story. I suggested he use the computer to make it faster and easier, and what followed were tens of hours, day after day, spent by himself in front of a computer screen. It was wonderful to watch his curse of self-isolation turn into a blessing of self-healing. Eventually, John also "outgrew" us

Natural mothering

and chose to switch to another excellent alternative school nearer to his home in the country where he is now flourishing. Stealing a line from one of my favorite modern Protestant hymns, "Wise hearts find truth in paradox." Amen, I say to that.

One of the most important points that I wanted to get across to the aforementioned reporter was that children, given the space to associate without external constraint, free from adult-imposed judgment and competition and free to be their authentic selves rather than some false school persona, are simply their own best teachers and therapists. The kids are thus entirely unfettered, as he had so accurately observed, not because of any particularly enlightened methodology being practiced by us teachers, but because we trust them to employ their own devices, knowing that they are naturally inclined to have it be this way. Which isn't to say that the adults in the Free School just ignore the kids while they float about in some artificial and exclusive bubble. We are interacting with them all the time—sometimes at their initiative, sometimes at ours—and we seldom hesitate to intervene when there is just outright abuse or dumping of negative emotion taking place. At the risk of repeating myself, we spend much of our time attending to the emotional and interpersonal dimensions of everyday life in the school because we believe them to be the cornerstones of life and of all learning. Our experience tells that when children know themselves, like themselves, and belong to themselves, the areas of learning that conventional schools spend countless thousands of hours going over and over again become practically effortless and require amazingly little time. I suspect that what the reporter was really picking up on, though he didn't use these words, was the surprising degree of aliveness that one usually finds in our school, and this, I am quite sure, is why.

... the risk in going on with this notion of "therapeutic school" is that it might suggest to some that we are all actually a bunch of amateur psychologists running around playing therapist most of the time.

Now it occurs to me that the risk in going on with this notion of "therapeutic school" is that it might suggest to some that we are all actually a bunch of amateur psychologists running around playing therapist most of the time. While I personally have done a great deal of individual and group therapy to repair my inner damage and to strengthen a much too fragile sense of myself—so that I would be both a better person and a better teacher—I recognize its built-in limitations and its potential for fostering dependency. On the other hand, I see many similarities between the roles of teacher and therapist, properly played. Neither good teachers nor good therapists impose their idea of who the individuals they are working with should or shouldn't be. Adroitly keeping their leading and guiding to a minimum, both endeavor only to encourage the growth and unfolding of the possibilities that are already present. Sometimes a little poking and prodding, or a little limit setting is called for, and sometimes it's better to let someone make mistakes and then learn from them. Good teachers and good therapists trust those they work with to know themselves better than anyone else.

I've gradually come to know that therapy doesn't cure anything, nor should it. We are all wayfarers, each on our unique journey in this life, with all its joy and all its suffering. So, the Free School isn't a place where we are always trying to fix kids, though we are certainly guilty (sic) from time to time of searching for psychological explanations—perhaps too often. Such is the temptation of a therapeutic orientation to reality, I guess. We try to avoid this pitfall as much as possible, and in any case, the kids usually protest loudly when they feel that we are over-psychologizing their experience. We then struggle to receive their teaching as gracefully as possible.

What the Free School is, I hope, is a place where all its co-participants can come to find out enough about who they uniquely are so that they can remove any obstacles to the full expression of their particular forms of specialness—be they artistic, intellectual, musical, scientific, poetic, athletic, mathematical, or some rare combination of them all—if that is what they choose to do. One of the cornerstones of our approach to education is that personal authenticity is the ground from which all true learning springs. That does, indeed, sound very "therapeutic," doesn't it? and means, I suppose, that we are a special school after all.

I can no longer count the number of times that children have demonstrated to me their superior inner wisdom regarding choices they have made about what they have needed to be doing in school, and when and how,. as well. A few years back, Allan came to us at the late age of eleven, already a budding young man with his mind made up about a great many things. His academic performance in public school had always been poor, as was his overall attitude toward almost everything, and when he began refusing to go to school at all, his parents decided to give us a try. Allan had suffered a lot of emotional abuse and neglect as a young child. Although his mother was well on her way to making a beautiful and complete recovery from alcoholism and had remarried a man who was a caring stepfather to Allan, he continued to display a number of psychosomatic side-effects such as nervous ticks and so on. Today, he most certainly would have had the absurd label, "Attention Deficit Disorder" stamped on his records, but thankfully it hadn't been invented yet. Allan had tremendous nervous energy and rarely liked to sit still for long, which generally made "progress" in things like math, and certainly reading, pretty much out of the question.

Naturally, there was a lot of concern about his academic standing, although not on Allan's part. His parents were shocked and relieved enough by the sudden reversal of his attitude toward going to school that they were willing to go along with our novel approach to their son's education, which consisted mainly of letting him do as he pleased while he was in our care. In addition to always being on the go, Allan was quite cocky and had little if any respect for anyone female. God, in all His infinite knowing, arranged it so that when Allan happened upon our little school, all six or eight of his age-mates were girls. I told him right up front that this was a curse placed on him to rid him of his prejudice and that no boys his age would arrive until he decided to begin treating girls and women with proper respect, which as it turns out, is exactly what ended up happening.

I discovered at some point that Allan had a fascination for the outdoors, for wildlife and for hunting and fishing. On a five-day trip to what was then our school's wilderness site in the Berkshire Mountains of Western Massachusetts—we have since been given 250 acres of undeveloped land closer to Albany in eastern New York State—Allan spent most of his time trying to catch small animals in homemade traps. His designs were crude and he caught nothing; but lo and behold, he showed up at school on the Monday morning following the trip with a book on animal trap design which he had gotten from his local library. We'd never seen him with a book before, and he proceeded to spend the next several weeks attempting to build the traps in our little school workshop. So much for his short attention span! Before long, he outgrew the book that had gotten him started and began working out his own designs, some of which were quite ingenious.

As paradox would have it, helpless baby animals literally began falling at the feet of our budding young trapper, who now began pouring the same intense energy that had previously been focused on hunting into nurturing nature's offspring. Allan's first "patient" was a starling hatchling, not more than a few days old, that had probably been pushed out of its nest by the mother. He contacted the State Conservation Department to find out how to feed and care for the featherless little creature. I have seen countless wild baby birds perish while under the hopeful and tender care of well-meaning children, and I certainly didn't expect this tiny starling to survive for very long either. Not only did the bird survive, but with Allan's tireless and loving parenting, including several middle-of-the-night feedings in the beginning, it flourished. When its feathers grew in sufficiently, Allan then helped the bird learn to fly. He was well along in preparing the young starling for its eventual release back into the wild when tragedy struck.

Once again paradox was at work. I had driven Allan out to the State Conservation Department so that he could show some other students the lab where he was volunteering his help a couple of times a week. Allan's relationship with these folks around the bird had led to an exciting apprenticeship with the State Wildlife Pathologist, and among other things, Allan was getting the training there that would lead to his becoming a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. Allan had brought the bird along with him—he generally took it everywhere he went—and we left it in the school van while we went in to tour the lab. Though it was a mild day in mid-spring, I made the common and often fatal mistake of not rolling a window down. The van sat parked in the sun and when we returned a half-hour later the bird was already stricken by the heat. We frantically tried to save it, but we were too late and the little starling died a few minutes later in Allan's trembling hands. It often takes a lot to make an adolescent boy cry, but cry he did, and thankfully without shame. When we got back to school, the sad news spread quickly. Before long, the entire school had joined him in his grief, and elaborate funeral preparations were begun. Allan fashioned a little casket while other kids created grave markers of all kinds. The entire school attended the solemn burial in the school's pet cemetery, which is under an old mulberry tree in my back yard.

Try to imagine the preceding vignette occurring in a conventional, age-segregated classroom. Mind you, this isn't to say that it couldn't or doesn't happen sometimes. There are thousands of gifted, dedicated and creative teachers busy working small miracles in our schools every day, usually against great odds. But it is difficult to imagine, isn't it? For one thing, the ease with which the younger Free Schoolers got into their grief when they saw and touched the little dead bird greatly facilitated Allan's necessary grieving in a way that no textbook or adult figure ever could have. Rather than this being some curricular lesson—or "extra-curricular," for that matter—about death and dying (which in itself would be a rare find in most schools), here was a struggling young adolescent receiving the total support of an entire community at a very poignant moment in his life.

Perhaps it is the inordinate amount of attention that we give to the emotional life and health of children and adults alike that would properly earn us the label of "therapeutic school." We believe very deeply that unexpressed feelings get stuck and then fester in the body and in the psyche, and that this causes breaks in the normal program of learning and development. While we don't do therapy with kids as such, we have developed any number of practices and techniques over the years which encourage the healthy expression of emotions as well as the articulation and exploration of life's inevitable conflicts. Throughout this book I keep referring to our "council meetings," with their often strong feeling content, where problems are often unraveled right to their sources. Also, we have always had a large punching bag available for anyone to let off anger harmlessly at any time. Visitors are sometimes both surprised and amused to see even our preschoolers pounding an over-stuffed chair with an old tennis racket and shouting, "No!" A few years ago, I actually lined a small, windowless interior room in the school with donated second-hand mattresses. Appearing to the uninformed as a veritable "padded cell," we named this unusual space, "the Feeling Room," and anyone can ask to use it whenever they feel the need. It gets quite a lot of good use because it is a wonderfully safe, private place for the release of pent-up emotions of all kinds. We noticed that the amount of fighting in the school dropped off markedly once the Feeling Room became popular. The Fire Marshal, on the other hand, was entirely unamused when he first discovered our new addition, but even he eventually came to understand its value and finally stopped insisting that we remove the mattresses because he thought they were a "a fire hazard."

I want to return to the word "No" for a moment. Often one of young children's very first words, it carries great power as it plays a defining role in the emergence of their identities as separate individuals. And then, at the age of five, if not sooner, we hustle them into an environment where "no" is virtually ***verboten*** and where conformity is enforced by all necessary means. Some children have no problem with such a regimen and appear to thrive under those artificial conditions. But what about the ones who don't? We have found over the years that they need to say, "No!" a lot, and without consequences other than ones organically inherent in the situation. Kids who have been spoiled and over-controlled for too long, either at home, or at school, or both, will sometimes say "no" even to spite themselves. When they are allowed to do that, it can then become a source of profound self-discovery. I remember a small group of nine-year-old boys we had once, all public school refugees, who banded together and refused to go on a week-long trip to our school's lakeside "outdoor education center." Now, I knew that these boys—all city kids—loved to fish and to run in the woods. But on the previous trip, they had been furious at the idea of having to gather firewood, and so here was an obvious act of glorified rebellion. I was sorely tempted to force them to go because, first of all, this was just the sort of experience they needed; and furthermore, I knew they would have a ball once they got there. Still, a quiet voice inside told me just to let them be. I will never forget their faces when the school emptied out as all of the other kids departed for the lodge. Their smug looks of victory turned lonely and forlorn within minutes, and then they were one sad sight when the others returned at the end of the week with all of their stories of great adventure. Our newly humble rebels proceeded to pester me for weeks to organize another expedition, and when they did get to go again, there was very little fuss about the chores that belong to camp life. How can we ever expect kids to become skillful in the art of making choices for themselves if they never get to exercise their option to say "no?"

Fortunately, it wasn't long before Allan was back in the saddle again. One morning, while he was on his way to school, he came upon a juvenile pigeon who was in pretty rough shape and unable to fly. And this story had a happy ending when, after a few weeks of Allan's restorative care, the now full-grown bird was well enough to be released successfully back into its urban environment. Everyone saluted Allan for saving the pigeon's life and he wore the hero's mantle with a lot of grace. The cockiness which I described above seemed to have disappeared without a trace. It was plain for anyone who wanted to see that while Allan was so busy healing those little creatures, he was also applying little splints to the broken wing places in himself that were a legacy of his own difficult and uncertain start in life.

After two years with us, Allan decided that he, too, was ready to leave the nest. Even though he previously had been so miserable in public school, the call of that wildly buzzing hive of adolescence—the middle school—became irresistible. I discouraged him from leaving the Free School just yet, only because he still hadn't done much to "catch up" academically. I was worried that he might be labeled a failure all over again and then revert back to all of the negative attitudes and behavior patterns that had led him to us in the first place. But if there's one thing we've learned, it's that once a kid has made up his mind to leave us, then it's important to let him go, with our full blessing. So, leave us he did; and sure enough, my fears were confirmed. After a couple of weeks, I received an irate phone call from Allan's new homeroom teacher. "Hadn't we taught the boy anything while he was in our school?" she shouted at me. In my calmest, most reassuring tones, I explained some of Allan's history to her. Next, I patiently recounted some of his amazing accomplishments to her and told her that, while they weren't exactly in academic areas, she would begin to see a carry-over once Allan recovered from his shock at being back in the kind of graded, competitive classroom where he had been such a miserable failure before. I urged her to try to relax and to see if they couldn't get Allan some extra help in some of the basic skills areas where he was lacking. I shared with her my discovery that there was nothing that I couldn't trust Allan with and that he was, in fact, a born leader. Doing my best to steady my rising annoyance, I struggled to find the words that would convey to her that she had a rare treasure on her hands, and that she'd damn well better not bury it in the sand. I assured her again that Allan's desire to succeed would bring him through the narrow place he was temporarily stuck in, and the conversation ended on a hopeful, friendly note.

I'll never know how much of my pitch she bought, but I managed to help buy Allan enough time for him to pull himself out of his slump. They found him some tutoring assistance, and by the end of the marking period, he was passing all subjects. This leads to my favorite Allan story of all. In the second half of that year, Allan's English teacher told the class to write a two-page paper on the book of their choice. Entirely on his own initiative—I don't even know where he learned of the book—Allan read Rachel Carson's classic ecological warning, *Silent Spring*. He proceeded to write an eight-page mini-thesis that the teacher then read to the entire class, declaring that it was the best composition that she'd ever received. Although the paper was full of spelling and grammatical errors, it had a big, fat "A+" on the cover. I proudly tell this one last story about Allan because it is such a pure example of what can happen when we return the responsibility for the learning process to its rightful owner (assuming someone has taken it away in the first place). Allan read that book and wrote that paper for himself, not for his teacher. The deep meaning which he expressed in his writing, and which thankfully that teacher was able to recognize and acknowledge him for, emerged from within Allan, and from nowhere else. Here was another wonderful reminder that real learning unfolds from the inside out and not the other way around.

Human development is simply not a linear progression. Not unlike dreams, it follows a logic all its own, varying tremendously from individual to individual. Its course is often uncanny and also deeply mysterious. When we remember at the Free School to respect the kids' own growth strategies—no matter how unlikely they might appear at the time—things always seem to come out right in the end. Again, this is not to say that we are "laissez faire," as our dear reporter ultimately wrote in the ignorant and largely insulting story which appeared in the Sunday addition of his newspaper. Teachers in our school often attempt to influence students in one direction or another—sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly; sometimes gently, and sometimes not so gently. With budding adolescents like Allan, though, force of any kind rarely works very well. They just tend to push back and rebel, or become sullen and withdraw. Thankfully, Allan was open to allowing me to give him some guidance and encouragement in a direction he was already inclined.

But then there was Sally. A student in our school for several years, she had been a bright, precocious child and an eager learner. All of a sudden (or so it seemed at the time), she hit adolescence and lost interest in just about everything. I tried mightily to find some inner spark that I could help her fan into flames, but all I ever got was smoke. I was having increasing "bad teacher" feelings and so the situation was slowly driving me a little nuts. There were two things that entire year that Sally spent her time doing, when she wasn't just sitting around, "hanging out." (My innate prejudice against non-doing is beginning to show, isn't it?) One was melting candle wax onto her hands and incessantly making molds of them; the other was weaving a multi-color rope on a small spool loom that she had fashioned—until the rope stretched more than twice around our rather large building. The whole school got caught up in her fascination as the rope grew longer and longer.

Now, I knew that Sally's parents were just completing a lengthy and difficult divorce, and that the combination of her feelings about that situation with the onset of puberty pretty well accounted for her drawn out, intense mood. Fortunately, I was able to relax my drive to feel like a good teacher by inspiring Sally to some great achievement, and instead to "stay off her case" and trust that she was doing what she needed to do (or not doing what she didn't need to do). Sally completed that year still weaving and molding and chose to move on to a public high school the following September. Though a successful student there, she grew dissatisfied with the endless routine and rote learning and so decided the next year to create a modified homeschool program with our school's founder as her primary mentor. The two of them had a ball together and Sally returned to being aggressive and joyful about learning. To make a long story short, upon completion of high school, she ended up earning a scholarship to a well-known private university. Sally came back one day to tell her old teachers what she realized, looking back, had contributed to her satisfying transition into adulthood perhaps as much as anything else: It was that last year she had spent in the Free School, "doing nothing."

"The Therapeutic School" is a chapter from a soon-to-be-published book by Chris. Our thanks—as always—to Chris for permission to include it!

> *Almost every child, on the first day he sets foot in a school building, is smarter, more curious, less afraid of what he doesn't know, better at finding and figuring things out, more confident, resourceful, persistent and independent than he will ever be again in his schooling—or, unless he is very unusual and very lucky, for the rest of his life. . .*
>
> *In he comes, this curious, patient, determined, energetic, skillful learner. We sit him down at a desk, and what do we teach him? Many things. First, that learning is separate from living. "You come to school to learn," we tell him, as if the child hadn't been learning before, as if living were out there and learning were in here, and there were no connection between the two. Secondly, that he cannot be trusted to learn and is no good at it. Everything we teach about reading, a task far simpler than many the child has already mastered, says to him, "If we don't make you read, you won't, and if you don't do it exactly the way we tell you, you can't." In short, he comes to feel that learning is a passive process, something that someone else does to you, instead of something you do for yourself.*
>
> *—John Holt, "School Is Bad for Children,"*
> *Saturday Evening Post, February 8, 1969.*

Being a member of the Association for Humanistic Psychology, I receive their newsletter, "Perspectives," and always look it over to find something worth reading in depth. What jumped out at me in this particular issue was the picture of Bennett Wong and Jock McKeen (q.v.)—and when I read their piece on self-esteem, I lost my heart! Some day I just gotta meet these guys! I loved learning that they discovered a lot of what they have in the alchemical retort of their relationship with each other!

So here's the letter I got back from the one I sent them, and the chapter from their book that deals with this "new" therapeutic commodity, "self-esteem." I know that in our own city, some welfare clients are now required to take a course in "self-esteem" in order to continue to qualify for benefits!

We decided to publish this eminently sensible piece in both *journals, since it is relevant to so many areas of family life as it is affected by institutional pressures!*

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28 May 1995

Mary Leue
The Journal of Family Life
72 Philip Street, Albany NY
USA 12202

Dear Mary:

... We both enjoyed your letter very much. We appreciated your candour, your wit, and your obvious irreverence in regards to the many sacred cows that have gradually accumulated, and threaten to smother us all. We also like to poke pins in balloons when they seem to be getting swollen out of proportion.

... We appreciated your take on the two of us, that you made from our article in the AHP *Perspective*.

I have read through the copies of *The Journal of Family Life* that you sent; thank you for providing them so that we could get a feel for your publication. Ben and I both like the look of your journal, and especially like the tone and fun of your letter. We would be pleased to have something that we wrote appear in your publication.

I am proposing that you consider reprinting some or all of the enclosed piece on "Self Esteem." This is a chapter from our book *A Manual For Life*. We have become increasingly concerned that the notion of self-esteem has become an icon, and people are feeling very bad about themselves because they don't have enough of it (they hate themselves for not having enough of the approved commodity!). We have talked with teachers who feel like failures, because they haven't managed to find the secret key to providing adequate self-esteem for all their little charges (as if self-esteem were something one could grant, like a knighthood, or a benevolent gift). So, the kids feel bad; the teachers feel bad, the whole thing is a mess!

When we were asked to speak at a conference entitled "Full Esteem Ahead" in California some years ago, held in memory of our friend Virginia Satir, we agreed to do so only if we could speak to the topic "Let's Hear It For Low Self-Esteem (Most of Our Friends Have It!)" We made a plea for self-acceptance, rather than striving for the goal of self-esteem. When we gave our address, a writer from *Newsweek* was there, and he interviewed us to possibly do a piece questioning the whole popularized notion of self-esteem. Well, the Gulf War opened up right at that time, his piece got shelved, and our chance for a podium in *Newsweek* was eclipsed by the machinations of war. Humbling.

Let me know if this article is acceptable to you. I would appreciate receiving a copy of the *Journal* in which our article appears, for our records.

I have also enclosed an updated biographical statement about Ben and myself. Thank you for contacting us. We wish you well in your ongoing work.

Warmly,
Jock McKeen

SELF-ESTEEM

by Bennett Wong and Jock McKeen

Self-esteem is the measure by which one regards the Self, the value that one places upon the Self, the respect that one has for oneself. Commonly, the development of self-esteem is seen as related to the mirroring function in personality development. The simplistic idea is that the more value that children see reflected in their parents' eyes, the more they will value themselves; the more positive experiences that children have during their earlier years of development, the greater their possibility of developing high self-esteem. It is difficult to argue with that proposition; it makes sense. Yet, we have met few if any people who appear to have achieved such a comfortable state of being. More commonly, people seem to suffer from low self-esteem. Indeed, it seems that most of those who are successful (by the standards of our culture) are compensating for a low sense of self-esteem; it is that very sense of low self-esteem that accounts for the drive toward success. Many such people appear to be happy, or at least would not want to change their lives.

On the other hand, we also know some people who do not value themselves beyond the ordinary; as a matter of fact, they may believe that others have many more talents than themselves. They, too, appear to be happy. Their virtue seems to be a true humility, and they seem to be at peace with themselves and others.

Such people as we have described seem to refute the idea that a high sense of self-esteem is a prerequisite for happiness and success. As a matter of fact, because it is a current psychological fashion to fret about self-esteem, many people are striving stoically for the blessed state of self-esteem; some even believe that it was their right at birth to have been provided with the necessary environment (such as loving, highly regarding, mature parents). They believe that this was their entitlement, and because it did not materialize, they feel resentment over having been betrayed and cheated by their parents. Some people appear to be "stuck" with such feelings, believing that if even their parents could not love them, nobody else will. Is that the only way of explaining this phenomenon? Surely some people with even more difficult backgrounds have been able to come to some happier resolution with their families. What is the difference?

First, let us examine the development of self-evaluation. Very early in life, children confuse two very different phenomena: the pleasure of mastery and the pride of achievement. The pleasure of mastery appears to be inherent in the organism, providing a feeling of fulfillment when children take their first steps or learn to tie their own shoelaces or successfully maneuver food to their mouths. With mastery, children experience the intriguing rewards of discovery, as their world expands and they become increasingly more self-reliant and competent. Such children become more self-determining, motivated by an inherent desire to their potential, to actualize that which yearns to be realized, to express an inner drive to grow. In these circumstances, the best thing that a parent or teacher can do is to provide a safe learning environment and some encouraging support for such mastery to blossom.

Unfortunately, with a strong urge to be ideal parents for their ideal children, most people are determined to help their children achieve these important steps toward self-reliance through encouragement, bribery, blackmail, threats of abandonment, and any number of other coercive means. It is all done "for the child's good." Under the watchful eyes of such authority figures, children begin to recognize that what they do is always subject to evaluation, to judgments of good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate, satisfactory or unsatisfactory; furthermore, their behavior seems able to produce pleasure and displeasure in others. Such circumstances foster a field dependence wherein the evaluation of others becomes more important than the child's own pleasure of mastery; the one increases as the other decreases.

Through introjection, the child swallows whole the evaluating functions of the parents (the "superego," "parent within," "Ideal Self," and so on), and self-esteem becomes linked with this inner judging authority. The nature of this authority (harsh, easy, inconsistent, rigid) is closely related to the kind of mirroring that the child experienced. Distortions in the mirroring function (such as over- or under-estimating) can have a radical effect on the child's self-esteem. If children are underestimated by their parents, they will tend to introject an underestimating inner judge, resulting in feelings of inadequacy, unworthiness, self-doubt, and uncertainty. The natural feelings of pleasure over mastery are abandoned in favor of such an evaluating process.

Overvaluation by the authority figure rarely produces a happier situation. Such distorted (convex) mirroring may indeed produce within the child an overly great superficial sense of high self-esteem; but if it does not match an inner sense of mastery, the child intuits it to be false. In such situations, the child can develop contempt for the external authority (and then, by association, for all authority), frequently ending with self-loathing for having duped those important authority figures. Thus, although such circumstances may appear to result in high self-esteem, they are accompanied by a deeper, more dangerous self-loathing and contempt for others.

Undervaluing (concave) mirroring from a parental figure tends to produce within the child feelings of worthlessness, incompetence, and self-actualization, beyond achievement. Most people waste this opportunity, continuing to seek other ultimate authorities; their true self-esteem suffers.

In the current psychological climate, self-esteem has become a central goal for many therapists and educators. By making it an achievement that must be reached, they have made self-esteem the new ideal. Such striving will tend to reproduce the original problem of the self-hatred cycle. People may attain a superficial sense of high self-esteem, only to discover more self loathing and self-hatred. We would do well to devote more attention to developing self-compassion, self-acceptance, and self-love, all as a means of experiencing a fuller sense of love with others. After all (to paraphrase the gospel of Matthew), "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain self-esteem, and lose his own soul?"

THE AUTHORS

Bennet Wong, M.D., F.R.C.P.(c) *received his psychiatric training at the Menninger School of Psychiatry.* **Jock McKeen, M.D., Lic.Ac.(UK)** *studied at the College of Chinese Acupuncture, Oxford, England. Ben and Jock together have blended an in-depth approach to self-development aimed at integration of the individual in body, mind and spirit, emphasizing responsibility for the self in health, relationships and lifestyle. They are the founders and co-Directors of* **PD Seminars at Haven By-the-Sea,** *a residential educational center*

In addition to their numerous articles in professional journals, they have co-authored A Manual for Life *(PD Publishing, 1992), from which this article was taken, have traveled and taught in Asia, have begun to lecture in Eastern Europe and acted as consultants to many agencies, corporations and groups/ Most of their approach has been derived from their intense investigation of their own relationship, as well as experiences with their clients.*

And here's an article by our own Mohammad Yadegari—this time on the teaching of math. His first two, one on anti-Muslim prejudice in this country, the other on the teaching of reading, appeared in the winter issue of ΣΚΟΛΕ. Please don't try to translate what he says into an empty prescription and then decide it doesn't work.. This is a plea for real teaching. We all know that any teaching is only as good as the teacher—but what Mohammad is suggesting as a program for teaching math makes a lot of sense as a plea for teaching in terms of kids' interests and natural curiosity.

Unlike John Gatto, Mohammad isn't ready to give up on public school teaching. He deserves our respectful attention, because he practices what he preaches. We need both viewpoints, as I'm sure John would be the first to acknowledge, having taught for over two decades himself! What counts is the kids themselves.

REVAMPING THE TEACHING OF MATHEMATICS

by Mohammad Yadegari

As a twenty-seven year veteran teacher, as a father who spent many years tutoring his children to supplement the public school program and provide them with a good education, and as a person raised to recognize that the difference between individuals is not in the color of their skin, their ethnicity, wealth, age, or gender, but in the degree and the level of their knowledge, I believe that the acquisition of knowledge is an exciting and worthy pursuit. Yet the longer I teach and the older I become, I see that quality education is a rarity in this country's classrooms. Being a mathematics teacher, I am compelled to expound my philosophy for revamping the teaching of mathematics in American schools.

Almost every year, around the month of December, a ritual of consternation overtakes many school officials; I have watched it year in, year out. The New York State Comprehensive Assessment Report sends administrators scrambling for "justification." Charts are drawn, excuses are made, and answers are sought from everyone, especially teachers. Yet the most essential element is not discussed. Simply put, the question that we have to answer is this, "Why does a child who enters elementary school with such enthusiasm lose interest as time progresses? Why does the child's spirit of inquiry and interest in learning turn to boredom? What kind of transformation takes place in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades that turns a happy and inquisitive child into an uninterested and sometimes hostile child.

In mathematics, I feel that the root of the problem lies in a major flaw in the curriculum. Children are bored because they have been taught and retaught the same material again and again and again. Take a cursory look at the mathematics taught to students in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. The students' world is a world of repetitious study of the number system, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, percents, fractions, decimals, and so on. The substance is always the same. The same numbers, the same examples, and the same verbiage. There is nothing new, nothing different.

We are stifling one of the fundamental assets of children, their natural curiosity. One of the major flaws in adulthood is our inability to remember what made us curious as children. In fifth grade, I was required to take a foreign language course. I took English, something completely new and different. It felt like entering "kindergarten" again. Everything I was learning was fresh, just like the first days of school when I had learned my own native Persian alphabet. I was entering a totally new world of magical fun, a challenging world, a world fraught with fascination. I still remember walking through the halls repeating the spelling of the word "bicycle" to my friend. English, a foreign language, was fascinating and beautiful. My excitement was constantly renewed: The impetus for learning and the desire for learning the unknown had penetrated my very soul.

In seventh grade, I began algebra. Algebra was still more different. Again, the heavens opened their gates, to a new road to a new language, mathematics. I learned that letters could be used to represent numbers. It helped to make the leap from the ordinary world of numbers to the abstract universe of symbols. I learned the "times table" of algebra—as our teacher used to call it. I learned how to expand the square of the sum of two quantities and the cube of the sum of two quantities, and to factor the difference of two squares. How exciting the concept of a variable can be, how different.

After the first week's introduction to algebra, I spent some time experimenting with numbers I had learned in the fifth and the sixth grades. Yes, indeed, what our teacher had called the "times table" of algebra did work, it did make sense. I experimented raising (5 +

3) to the second power and found out that it was equal to 25 plus 2 times 5 times 3 plus 9. I also discovered that (100 - 9) was the same as (10 - 3) times (10 + 3). So, I was convinced that the new abstract form was correct, and stopped thinking in terms of numbers. I had discovered a new tongue, and it was time to excel in it.

Adults who had control over our education did not pass judgment on our ability to learn. They assumed that we were capable of learning. They told us that "Learning as a child is like chiseling in stone; the imprint will always remain." It was taken for granted that if we were to experience the wonder of the new, we would pursue it with all the enthusiasm of children's first day of school.

The point is clear. We, the educators, can stimulate the interest of children by teaching them a new language every few years. We should never forget how a child learns. Above all, we must remember the nature of a child: strong imagination, excitement in discovery, ability to learn quickly, sensitivity, anxiety over being rejected, and most important, the willingness to try something new.

All students can learn more if properly challenged. Low expectations and poor work habits limit students' horizons. Repetitious materials in mathematics in the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades can be condensed into two years of comprehensive teaching in the fifth and sixth grades. The basics of arithmetic and geometry should be emphasized. Verbal ability, an essential part of learning mathematics, should be encouraged through reading comprehension that will facilitate better understanding and interpretation of word problems. Stacks and stacks of "busy work" in the form of worksheets should be eliminated.

The seventh and eighth grades should become a new phase of transition in learning in general and in mathematics in particular. Having prepared the students by more thorough training in the fifth and sixth grades gives us the opportunity to advance the entire group of students seventh grade. A new language should be introduced to maintain the child's level of interest. Specifically, I propose that a modified version of Math Course I be taught to all seventh graders. Algebra should be the first topic introduced and emphasized in that grade. This would simply introduce the students to new venues, approaches, and levels of thinking. All students should be required to take the regents mathematics exam at the end of the seventh grade. Outside New York, a comprehensive final exam should be provided to assess the student's knowledge. Students who fail the seventh grade final exam should repeat the same course again in the eighth grade. Even repeating the course, they are ahead, since they would not normally take this course until ninth grade.

Those who pass the Modified Math Course I should continue a rigorous course of study in algebra and trigonometry in the eighth grade. This is material that students no longer study as a full year's discipline in high school. Until the late 1970s, all students were required to take algebra in ninth grade. Algebra was reinforced in eleventh grade along with an introduction to trigonometry. Both these subjects in addition to other mathematical disciplines were continued in the twelfth grade. It was in the late seventies that the State Education Department introduced a three-year math sequence (Math Course I, Math Course II, and Math Course III, all under the title: A Topical Approach), which introduced students to bits and pieces of various mathematical topics. In moving to the new approach, something was lost. The mathematics curriculum was watered down and students who graduated from high school were not required to learn the algebraic and trigonometric formulas necessary for a successful completion of college courses. The State Education Department stubbornly refuses to recognize this deficiency.

Having passed Math Course I as early as seventh grade allows time for students to study some algebra and trigonometry. The enrichment will give the students a solid background and more perspective to approach later high school and college mathematics courses.

In some schools in New York State at present time, many students are given the opportunity to take Math Course I in the eighth grade allowing them to advance further in high school math. My proposed revamping of the teaching of mathematics in the Middle School advances each entire math class and offers extra enrichment for the most able.

Generally, students are not prepared adequately for college mathematics. Teaching algebra, geometry, and trigonometry in the Middle School would make them excel in high school, especially with the new State Education Department's proposed Math-Science-Technology program. Using technology in integrating mathematics and science is the wave of the future. What the abacus was to the ancient Chinese, the computer is to the twenty-first-century Americans.

As the teaching of mathematics and science becomes integrated, mathematics as an independent discipline should not be neglected. Courses such as pre-calculus and calculus should be offered along with new integrated Math-Science classes. Students need to be equipped with mathematical skills necessary to grasp both science and computers.

In order to produce optimum success for this proposal, guidance personnel, administrators, teachers, and parents must work together. In-service classes for teachers should be offered using the resources available in the school and outside. School administrators must be ready to give credit and support to teachers who are willing to create and try new ideas. Teachers and administrators must put aside their adversarial positions and forget personal jealousies and animosities. We must be steadfast in the belief that any school is a public institution of learning, working for a better quality of education for all students.

Mohammad Yadegari, Ph.D., is a teacher of mathematics at Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk High School and is an adjunct professor of Islamic Studies at Union College in Schenectady and the University at Albany. He has written extensively on Islam and the history of the Middle East.

Married and father of two children, Mohammad Yadegari has been living in the USA for over thirty years.

> ***The institution we call "school" is what it is because we made it that way. If it is irrelevant, as Marshall McLuhan says; if it shields children from reality, as Norbert Weiner says; if it educates for obsolescence, as John Gardner says; if it does not develop intelligence, as Jerome Bruner says; if it is based on fear, as John Holt says; if it avoids the promotion of significant learnings, as Carl Rogers says; if it induces alienation, as Paul Goodman says; if it punishes creativity and independence, as Edgar Friedenberg says; if, in short, it is not doing what needs to be done, it can be changed; it must be changed.***
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> ***—Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner,***
> **Teaching as a Subversive Activity. Dell *(Delta).1969.***

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: A MOTIF FOR THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

by André Houle

GREECE: Classical Period—450 to 330 B.C.

The community in which Greeks lived in classical times was called a *polis*. The closest translation in English would be to call it a city-state. The city-state consisted of the central city plus the countryside. People living within the city-state were considered citizens. Athens was one of the more influential city-states.

The Greek city-state was a natural result of the geography of Greece, broken up as it was by mountains into well-defined areas. The people that lived together in a particular area came to feel a bond of social unity amongst each other. Each citizen felt responsible for the protection and welfare of the city-state. Each citizen also felt the city-state was in part responsible for their own welfare. It followed that everyone was ready to defend the city-state against invasion and equally eager to participate in the politics of government.

In classical times the government of the city-state was a democracy, the first of its kind, a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. At any particular point in time, not just on election day, an estimated 75% of voters were participating in government in one form or another. The American democracy is government by the people through their elected representatives meeting at stated intervals. In Athens, the people were the government—they exercised their powers not at intervals, but at all times and in all departments. Our word "politics" is derived from the Greek word *polis*, the city-state, where citizens played a highly active role in government. The Greeks then, and still today, are known as a very politically active people.

The Greeks in their democratic city-states were able to set precedents in fields other than government, including art, literature, and mathematics, which are still studied today at the college level, and athletics, for which the Olympic games are named. The Greeks and their city-state have had a significant impact on the development of civilization (Miller, 1941).

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

The United States Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Continental Congress in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. The following is a statement from that Declaration :

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

The Constitution of the United States was introduced at a convention of the thirteen states on September 12, 1787. It consisted of the Preamble and seven Articles. The Constitution was then ratified by the thirteen states through their elected representatives in the following order:

State	**Date**	**Vote**
Delaware	December 7, 1787	30 yes / 0 no
Pennsylvania	December 12, 1787	43 yes / 23 no
New Jersey	December 18, 1787	38 yes / 0 no
Georgia	January 2, 1788	26 yes / 0 no
Connecticut	January 9, 1788	128 yes / 40 no
Massachusetts	February 6, 1788	187 yes /168 no
Maryland	April 28, 1788	63 yes / 11 no
South Carolina	May 23, 1788	149 yes / 73 no
New Hampshire	June 21, 1788	57 yes / 46 no
Virginia	June 26, 1788	89 yes / 79 no
New York	July 26, 1788	30 yes / 27 no
North Carolina	November 21, 1789	194 yes / 77 no
Rhode Island	May 29, 1790	34 yes / 32 no

Vermont: ratified at convention on January 10, 1791.

Shortly after its introduction and ratification by a number of States, the Constitution began to confront growing opposition in Congress. Many believed the Constitution was not sufficiently explicit as to individual and States' rights. This led to an agreement to submit to the people immediately after the adoption of the Constitution a number of safeguarding amendments. So on

September 25, 1789, Congress adopted and submitted to the States the Bill of Rights, the first article of which guarantees:

Freedom of Speech, and of the Press, and the Right to Petition:

> Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech or the press, or the right of people to assemble peaceably and petition the government for a redress of grievance.

In summary, the establishment of the United States was based on, and was meant to continue to be based on, the participation of citizens in government. We, the citizens of the United States, should do as the Greeks did in their prime, and become politically active.

President Eisenhower may have said it best:

"Politics ought to be the part-time profession of every citizen."

CHINA:

China is the oldest civilization in history. Its existence can be traced back over 5000 years. Perhaps such a long-lasting society has some worthwhile characteristics. Let us take a closer look at the Chinese.

The Chinese have long viewed the family as an important part of society. From a book entitled *My Country and My People* published in 1935, the author Lin Yutang writes: "The family and the family system can account for all there is to explain in the Chinese social life." The family is the glue which has held China together.

To clarify the role of the family in Chinese society, the following is also a quote from *My Country and My People:*

> The Chinese view the family as the "basis of the state" or more generally as the basis of human society. The family affects all their social concerns. It is quite personal. It teaches children the first lessons of social obligation between man and man, the necessity of mutual adjustment for mutual existence, self control, courtesy, a well defined sense of duty, a sense of obligation and gratitude towards parents, and respect for elders. The family very nearly takes the place of religion by giving man a sense of social sur-

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vival and family continuity, thus satisfying man's craving for immortality. The family is the base upon which the Chinese place personal satisfaction and social stability.

The Chinese idea of the family as the basic social unit is based on the teachings of Confucius, the venerated Chinese philosopher who lived from 551 to 479 B.C. Confucius' teachings provide a context by which people in the family are to relate and interact with each other and with society at large. A basic tenet of the Confucian philosophy is to treat the family as "the base and origin of society." After 5000-some odd years of China's existence, there may be some truth to this statement.

Perhaps, as presented in "The United States of America: A Social Diagnosis" (see ΣΚΟΛΕ, Winter, 1995, pp. 78-88), a discussion among citizens of the United States with the intent of reestablishing the American family may be in order.

JAPAN:

The development of Japan over the centuries has been unique as a result of its geography—it is an island. Until recently, Japan has had the capacity to isolate itself from its neighbors, or, as Japan has done on occasion in the past, open its doors to foreign influence.

At about 400 A.D., the Japanese acquired the Chinese script. Prior to that they did not possess their own method of writing. Since then, many changes have occurred in the two separate languages so that they are now hardly recognized as relatives.

Buddhism was introduced to Japan at the end of 800 A.D. Prior to this, the Japanese had their own religion called Shinto which means "the way of the gods". Shinto is based on the worship of nature, gods, and ancestors. The Japanese, however, accepted Buddhism because it was far more complex and spiritually satisfying than Shinto. To this day however, both religions are still vibrant within Japanese culture. If you were to ask, "How many Japanese are Shinto and how many are Buddhist?" you would be informed that almost every Japanese is both.

On the coattails of the acceptance of Buddhism, from China also came the Confucian philosophy as discussed earlier. The Japanese were quick to integrate the importance of family into their social structure, as they still do today.

After the integration of written language, Buddhism, and the Confucian philosophy, Japan reverted back to a more or less isolated island state. They remained so until the mid 1800s and the era of Meiji, which translates to "Enlightened Government".

During the Meiji period, 1868 to 1912, a tide of Western influence swept over Japan. The Japanese shed their long-standing feudal system of government and adopted many aspects of Western civilization. This period of modernization included the establishment of a more Western-style government, the introduction of Western technology, and the integration of the Western free market economy. The Japanese went from Shoguns and the feudal system to an open society where people were allowed to choose freely their own profession, residence, and religion. The peasant, once attached to the soil, was freed and land became a commodity that could be bought or sold. The Japanese began to study profusely the technologies that the West had to offer. Education became a priority among all Japanese. By the end of the Meiji period in 1912, Japan had developed into a world power (Keene, 1959; Langer, 1966).

An aside will be taken here to clarify that all cultures have positive and negative aspects. The same Greek culture referred to earlier that was the first democracy in history, was a limited democracy in that women, metics, and slaves could not be voting citizens. "Metics" were foreigners residing in the Greek city-state and could never attain citizenship. Only men, and only men whose ancestry could be traced as being from the city-state, could vote. These issues and the presence of slavery are negative aspects of Greek culture.

Concerning China, as expressed earlier, "The family and the family system can account for all there is to explain in Chinese social life." Family is a priority in China, perhaps to the neglect of other important areas such as participation in government. The author has spoken with a number of Chinese individuals who have said their culture long ago came to the conclusion that participation in government was worthless: "Why bother; we can't make a difference. Let the government do what it wants; we've got kids to feed and a family to raise." Perhaps in antiquity this attitude was viable, but today on the verge of the 21st century (47th by the Chinese calendar) China is the only remaining communist power in the world, a communist power with a poor human rights record. This human rights record may be considered a negative aspect of

Chinese culture, and it may be the result of China's belief that participation in government is not worthwhile.

A negative aspect of Japanese history may be its Imperial rule in the 1930s that led to its military aggression in World War II. Japanese society is also particularly strict in imposing standards of behavior on the individual. Because the Japanese exert greater dependence on the group as a whole, the individual tends to conform more willingly to social pressures. This may relate to Japan's popular support of its military efforts under Imperial rule in WWII. Such social pressures may also tend to stifle the creativity and independence of the individual, and may explain why Japan has had to rely on outside influence for new ideas.

To return now to Japanese history, after its defeat in World War II, Japan was leveled. The Allied Occupation following Japan's surrender was necessary for a number of reasons: to provide necessities such as food and temporary housing, to plant the seeds of a democratic government, and primarily to help rebuild Japan. The Japanese were surprisingly receptive to the input from the Allied Occupation, perhaps because they were utterly frustrated with the military regime to which they had seemed so devoted. The Japanese welcomed American input.

In 1941 at the start of the American involvement in WWII, a scientist by the name of William Edwards Deming was introducing a concept of management to American companies involved in wartime production. His management theory was based on Statistical Quality Control. A number of companies implemented his philosophy. Shortly after the war however American companies throughout the country adopted a different method of management as professed by Frederick Winslow Taylor. The Taylor method was based on the present "assembly line" model of corporate culture. Front-line workers were to perform simple tasks that are coordinated by several layers of management (bosses), all of whom are under the control of the reigning CEO (Corporate Executive Officer). This method of management itself may be considered somewhat feudal—great wealth and power for the few; low tech, highly repetitive jobs for the many (Jaccoby, 1991).

Since no one in America was interested in his philosophy of management, Dr. Deming in 1949 graciously accepted the first of what was shortly to become hundreds of invitations to Japan to lecture on the subject of management and quality (Austin, 1991). The Japanese, as they have done throughout history, accepted and promptly integrated a foreign influence: Dr. Deming's philosophy.

They have since out-performed the United States in the marketplace.

On that note, let's look at Dr. Deming's philosophy of management, (Walton, 1986):

14 points:

1: Create Constancy of Purpose for Improvement of Product and Service.
2: Adopt the New Philosophy.
3: Cease Dependence on Mass Inspection to Achieve Quality.
4: End the Practice of Awarding Business on Price Alone.
5: Improve Constantly and Forever the System of Production and Service.
6: Institute Training for All Employees.
7: Adopt and Institute Leadership.
8: Drive Out Fear.
9: Break Down Barriers Between Staff Areas.
10: Eliminate Slogans, Exhortations, and Targets for the Workforce.
11: Eliminate Numerical Quotas in the Workplace.
12: Remove Barriers that Rob People of Pride in Their Work.
13: Endorse Education and Self Improvement for Everyone.
14: Take Action to Accomplish this Transformation.

7 Deadly Diseases:

1: Lack of Constancy of Purpose.
2: Emphasis on Short Term Profits.
3: Evaluation of Performance, Merit Rating, and Annual Review.
4: Mobility of Top Management.
5: Running the Company on Visible Figures Alone (counting

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the money).

6. Excessive Medical Costs.

7. Excessive Cost of Insurance, Fueled by Lawyers on Contingency.

Some Obstacles:

Neglect of long range planning and transformation.

The supposition that solving problems, or automation and new machinery will transform industry.

Obsolescence in schools.

Reliance on Quality Control Departments.

False Starts: pitching a whole new and improved managerial scheme when nothing is seriously being changed.

Inadequate Training.

Inadequate Testing of Prototypes.

Resistance of Unions to any kind of change in the system.

In summary, the Deming philosophy is based on cooperation rather than competition in,the workplace. To be successful in a complex world of constantly changing products and services, employees must be highly motivated. That may be asking a lot, but Deming's model is ready and waiting—it doesn't do away with the hierarchy of management *per se*, but replaces the adversarial workplace with a more humanistic system. Managers are responsible for rooting out poor quality and improving the workplace by LISTENING to employee input. The Toyota employee averages 33 suggestions to improve production per year (Aguayo, 1990). Who knows how to improve production better than the one doing the producing? Most importantly, most of these suggestions are implemented with the consent of management—no deaf ears, no brick walls. Managers become coaches, encouraging all members to improve. Workers are highly motivated and take pride in their work. And guess what happens: PRODUCTIVITY INCREASES.

SUMMARY:

The establishment of the United States was based on, and was meant to continue to be based on, the participation of citizens in government. We, the citizens of the United States, should do as the Greeks did in their prime, and become politically active.

We, the people of our country, should re-establish the family, the family upon which the Chinese have based their long-lived society.

We, the people of the United States, should adopt the Deming philosophy of management, as the Japanese have recently done, as they've done with a number of foreign influences throughout history.

CONCLUSION:

In the United States then, the motif for the individual and society is to utilize synthisophy (sin thi' sa fe), to be synthisophic (sin thi saw' fic), to synthisophize (sin thi' sa fiz):

SYNTHesis/HIStory/SOPHY

Synthesis: the putting together of two or more things to form a whole
History: what has happened in the life and development of a people/country
Sophy: Greek root; *sophia*: skill, wisdom, knowledge

SYNTHISOPHY: TO PUT TOGETHER THE WISDOMS OF HISTORY:

Integrate the wisdoms of the Greeks—become politically active in a democracy that's based on citizen participation.

Integrate the wisdoms of the Chinese—emphasize the importance of family.

Integrate the wisdoms of the Japanese—the capacity to accept and implement new ideas—particularly the Deming philosophy, which the Japanese originally acquired from the United States.

SYNTHISOPHY: TO PUT TOGETHER THE WISDOMS OF HISTORY

DISCUSSION:

Concerning government, hats off to the Clinton administration in areas of income tax, sin tax, crime, and health care—our democracy is working. To quote a trite but applicable proverb with reference to this paper however, you can't legislate morality. Although the administration and Congress are doing everything within their power, they cannot legislate citizen participation, they cannot legislate the importance of family, and they cannot legislate the Deming philosophy. This synthisophic revolution is in the hands of the people....

An old adage is most applicable here: wherever there is a group of people, there's politics. I'm sure you are well aware of this in your profession, at the workplace, or wherever you are a member of a group. The synthisophic revolution is in the hands of the people. Wherever there are people, there's politics. To go one step further, since the government cannot legislate morality, it is only in the power of the people to become politically active at the moral level that we will incorporate the importance of the family and the Deming philosophy. Let's do it.

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Special thanks to James Ruell and Shu-Hui Ho

André Houle, also a contributor to the winter ΣΚΟΛΕ, has been a University of Mass. graduate student in education and history. André is a person of many skills and talents with widely varied job experience. Having just completed his student teaching, he intends now to teach in public school. Let's hope he doesn't lose his idealism as he learns to cope with the"politics of experience" there.

André also sent us the following excerpt from his historical reading which supports our belief that in using the term ΣΚΟΛΕ (SKOLE, pronounced "sko-lay") as a description of the concept of learning we are hoping to exemplify, we are not entirely out of line in attributing it to Socrates and Plato. Thanks, André!

from:
PLUTARCH AND HIS TIMES
by R. H. Barrow
Indiana University Press
Bloomington, Indiana, 1967

... As Plutarch grew older, he became the leader; he gave a lecture, threw the matter open to discussion and later put the results into written shape. Roman friends were welcome and indeed took a leading part. The activities of this centre of learning and fellowship were described by Plutarch as *schole* or *diatribe*, terms which suggest something voluntary and spontaneous, and the ultimate issue, though not the professed motive, was a way of life. The affiliation of the gatherings is indicated if it is noted that the birthdays of Socrates and Plato "...were observed as feast days"... To use modern ideas, it seems that we are to think of a combination of elements taken from a "University extension lecture", a reading party, a literary club, a session circle, a house-party, while Plutarch himself must have been something like the highly cultivated "squire-parson" around here and there in the eighteenth century.

Here are four treasures reprinted from *A Voice for Children*, with kind permission from the editor, Edward M. Jones: Thanks, Ed. Long may you flourish!

REVIEW:

***A Voice for Children*, Volume 1, Number 8. Spring 1993, Woodward, OK**

Reviewer, Malcolm B. Campbell

SUMMERHILL SCHOOL: A NEW VIEW OF CHILDHOOD

edited by Albert Lamb

Good news! A.S. Neill's *Summerhill* is back in print. The Bible of the 1960s alternative schooling movement in the United States is now available for the 1990s. Brilliantly edited by former Summerhillian pupil and now teacher at Summerhill, Albert Lamb, *Summerhill School: A New View of Childhood* provides an opportunity to hear once again A. S. Neill tell of fifty years of running his "pioneer self-governing Free School, Summerhill." Neill's narrative reveals a message to educators, to parents, and most significantly, to children as appropriate in the 1990s as it was twenty and more years ago: children have an inherent right to childhood.

This reissue of *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing*, originally published in the United States with a foreword by Erich Fromm, author of *Escape From Freedom*, November 7, 1960, the beginning of John F. Kennedy's short-lived New Frontier, is an occasion not for nostalgic celebration.

While there are those, including this writer, for whom this edition will evoke empathetic agreement with Orson Bean s observation in A Voice .for Children (Winter, 1992) that thirty years ago "the book hit me like a ton of bricks," Albert Lamb's new edition of *Summerhill* should encourage a revaluing of Neill's (1883-1973) accent on self-determination. And a new edition is what *Summerhill School: A New View of Childhood* is.

Former Summerhill student Lamb's edition more than compensates for its lack of the poetry by William Blake and Khalil Gibran as well as Erich Fromm's trenchant foreword which graced the original Harold H. Hart edition of *Summerhill* (1960), reprinted by Simon and Schuster in December, 1984. *Summerhill School: A*

New View of Childhood is about A. S. Neill's "pioneer self-governing Free School, Summerhill;" it also contains a good deal about Neill and those, like Homer Lane and Wilhelm Reich, who encouraged Neill to be, as Homer Lane put it, "on the side of the child." Those without easy access to A. S. Neill's autobiography, *"Neill! Neill! Orange Peel!"* (1972), or Jonathan Croall's biography, *Neill of Summerhill: The Permanent Rebel* (1983), will delight in Neill's observations on his life before and after the founding of his Summerhill School, "my life," in mid-1920s Britain, memoirs which form Part Two of Lamb's edition.

Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing was for Neill a publication not without its ironies. Neill thought *Summerhill* in its original form seriously flawed because this compilation of his earlier *The Problem Child, The Problem Parent, That Dreadful School,* and *The Free Child* accented his Freudian explanations of an earlier day for children's behavior. Additionally, his American publisher had sanitized the volume of all references to the controversial Wilhelm Reich. Yet, *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing* sold two million copies in the United States ten years after its publication. The book's success in the United States brought Neill's views on educating children to a generation of American educators who were casting American schools of the 1960s and 1970s in a refreshing libertarian direction . Besides, *Summerhill's* royalties brought Neill a needed income for his financially straightened Summerhill.

Summerhill School: A New View of Childhood is a masterful corrective to A.S. Neill's reservations about *Summerhill*, a publishing effort Neill claimed that had "saved Summerhill."

Hopefully Albert Lamb's reissue of Neill's work will provoke an awareness of childhood in contemporary generations accustomed all too frequently to defining the possibilities of children through the perspective of adult-authored standards of performance.

Finally, a personal note. In June, 1967, I wrote to A.S. Neill requesting a visit to his Summerhill for later that summer. I intended to visit friends at Sheffield University and thought the occasion opportune for meeting face-to-face an educator whom I much admired. I received his response dated July 11, 1967: " Sorry but we close before you arrive. I shall be off to recover from a term of shoals of visitors and scores of letters. At eighty-three and a half it is all too strenuous for me. Yours, A.S. Neill." Readers of

Summerhill School: A New View of Childhood will find Neill as candid as did I during a summer twenty-six years ago.

Malcolm B. Campbell, Ph.D. is Professor of Education, Department of Educational Foundations and Inquiry, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio.

Albert Lamb, editor of the **Summerhill Trust Journal**, *is a staff member at Summerhill, having been a student there. years ago. He and his wife live in the Cotswolds. His children have also attended the school.*

* * * *

From A *Voice for Children*,
Volume 2, No. 1, Winter, 1995. Santa Fe, NM

FROM A.S. NEILL'S POINT OF VIEW

> *The new school should do something about civics, not teach them but allow the pupils to live them, and that means a considerable amount of self-government.*

I must confess that I am an atrociously bad disciplinarian. Today Violet Brown began to sing Tipperary to herself when I was marking registers. I looked up and said: "Why the happiness this morning, Violet?", and she blushed and grinned. I believe that the one thing that will save the people is individualism. The new school should do something about civics, not teach them but allow the pupils to live them, and that means a considerable amount of self-government.

I hold that education should concern itself with the emotions and leave the intellect to look after itself. But what chance have the emotions in a system that makes school subjects of greater importance? Think of *Lord of the Flies*, a most damaging criticism (unconscious on the part of Golding) of our education. His boys were drilled in subjects; they were disciplined; their emotions were never allowed to be expressed, so little wonder that once free on an island they killed each other. The "Hitler" was the head choir boy, the religious lad.

I am not against learning...but I want to put learning in its place; I want it to be asked for. I asked (one of my pupils) of eight what he did with his pocket money. He said he didn't spend it, but saved it to buy history books. He is now a professor of history. Two other boys in the same class were interested in math and science. One is now a professor of math and the other a lecturer in physics. These boys sought learning without any suggestion from parents or staff.

I cannot think of education in terms of schooling...what is wrong with the world is the killing of the life force of the young by the old. I sincerely believe that this is the source of the hate in the world. One day, if this sick society does not blow itself up, delinquency and crime will be treated as tenderly and humanly as bodily sickness is treated in our hospitals. I hate being so old if only because I won't live to see love ruling instead of hate and fear. There can be no free will as long as conditioning of the young obtains. Self regulation implies a belief in the goodness of human nature, a belief that there is not, and never was, original sin. People who protest the granting of freedom to children...do not realize that they start with an unfounded, unproved assumption—the assumption that a child will not grow or develop unless forced to do so.

What influence has Summerhill had on education in general?

Natural modesty stands in the way of my answer to this question. How can I tell what effect the school has had in the U.S.A., Japan, Sweden, Israel? Not so much as some would think. Many have said to me that Summerhill has done much to make other schools more human and less authoritative. If Summerhill has had any influence, I fancy that it was in most cases modified. Some schools accept freedom but they call it ordered freedom, to me a contradiction in terms.

... It is sad to say it, but there can be no real freedom in a state (U.S. public) school if the head is not on your side. Hundreds of young teachers would be delighted to have more freedom in their classes but they cannot get it and some tend to become cynical and resigned to their fate.

How can Summerhill's principles be applied to a state (U.S. public) school?

Any young teacher in a big school would find that it is impossible to vary from the school tradition and customs, but that is not to say that a teacher cannot use as much freedom as he dare. He can be on the side of the child; he can dispense with punishment; he can be human and jolly. Yet he will find himself in all sorts of difficulty. It is sad to say it, but there can be no real freedom in a state (U.S. public) school if the head is not on your side. Hundreds of young teachers would be delighted to have more freedom in their classes but they cannot get it and some tend to become cynical and resigned to their fate. There can be no freedom so long as the educational establishment rules that there must not be.

I sometimes spank my girl of three when she is naughty. Is it right or wrong to spank?

It is not a question of right or wrong; in a way it is a case of cowardliness, for you are hitting someone not your own size. I don't suppose you hit your husband when he is being a nuisance. Spanking generally has nothing much to do with the child; it is an outlet for adult rage and frustration and hate. Happy mothers do not spank; they do not need to, for their state of well-being is unconsciously conveyed to the child.

You often talk about the establishment. What is it anyway?

It is a most powerful affair, is the establishment. No nonconformist can belong to it. The establishment is fearful; it fears any new idea that may kill its conforming ability. Today the word means, by and large, all those who support the status quo, the conservative but not necessarily in politics, those fixed for ever in their conventional opinions; in short, Ibsen's compact majority "which never has right on its side."

Do you use IQs in Summerhill?

No. They have limited value. They cannot test imagination, humor, creativeness; they are "head" affairs and in Summerhill we do not give any emphasis to head work.

> ***I want to tell my bairns that the only sin in the world is cruelty.***
>
> ***—A. S. Neill***

["FROM A.S. NEILL'S POINT OF VIEW" is a regular column in *AVFC*]

From A *Voice for Children*, Volume 1, Number 1. Winter, 1990

"Thou shalt be on the side of the child." —Homer Lane

THE TROUBLE WITH FREEDOM

by Trevor Phillips

The Trouble with Freedom is that it's too often a cliché, a platitude with which we all feel so comfortable, at times even smug, it's something we all support (of course), until we really have to place ourselves on the line. I have found that substituting another word or phrase for such a cliché, one more controversial, gets us closer to what we truly think about these matters of real concern.

Instead of talking about freedom—in connection with children, particularly—let's consider respect. Which comes first? Do I accord children freedom because I respect them, or do I respect them because they are free? I can pose a juicier question: If I say I respect children, how do I demonstrate it? A.S. Neill had no trouble whatever with this. In point of fact, despite what his supporters say and have said—and despite even what he himself wrote—it's quite obvious that respect was, for Neill, more basic than freedom. The trouble with freedom is, as I have implied, it goes with apple pie and Motherhood. Respect is more troublesome. In the context of Summerhill and Neill, it is the act of according to children the identical rights you expect them to accord to you.

"Of course I respect children," one may say... but one hardly means by that what A.S. Neill means!

Yes, I'm more convinced than ever! Respect takes precedence over freedom, because respect is always active in the world and freedom too often a museum piece. Respect—the sort of respect that matters—affects another and determines the quality of the other's freedom which surely is an immediate consequence of the respect. Freedom is too nebulous: it's too often out of synch, devoid of context.

Neill used to say that freedom is the answer. True, but the context was respect, was his love—which for Neill was respect—if you want to bring in another dimension—for his boys and girls. He so loved/respected them that freedom was the obvious, the natural, the only way to go.

The trouble with freedom is not the concept, the idea, the glory, but the appeal to the wrong emotions, often at the expense of any actions.

Trevor J. Phillips is Chairman of the Educational Foundations Inquiry Dept., Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio 43402.

PLEASE, DON'T STEAL MY BLISS

by Edward M. Jones, editor of *A Voice for Children*

> *Eminent scholar, Joseph Campbell, died in 1987. During a PBS interview in 1986 Bill Moyers asked, "What should a man do with his life?" Campbell responded, "Follow his bliss."*

I read, and I read, and it is my bliss—and it has been since the age of four. I remember our humble farm house, and cold, wintry days, and the crackling fire in the Round Oak stove. Every day I sat on my mother's lap as she read from Grimm's Fairy Tales, or Mother West Wind's Stories. Rumpelstilskin was more real to me than the children who lived a half mile down the road, and much more interesting. I knew his world, and lived in it as if it were my own.

Reynard the fox was a villain I loved to hate. I admired his cunning, and dreaded that he might be successful in one of his stealthy night-time forays to a local chicken coop. Gruff and kindly grandpa frog sitting on his lily pad was the wise and watchful father I had never known. Every inhabitant of the field, the forest, and the pond was important to me. I imagined I knew more of their lives than the author told. I knew Reynard was truly living the life of a fox, and the raccoon lived at peace with himself without envy for the world of other creatures around him.

So many times I shared warm and foggy early mornings when robins sang their slow and rolling song, and the trees looked like angels with spreading wings. I loved it all, and it was my bliss.

There was no question whether I would learn to read; I knew I must. I had to move closer to the places, the trees, the animals, to feel more intensely the conversations, the thoughts, the fears and the joys. Every written word was a treasure to be consumed, a stepping-stone to my greatest dream. By the age of four that journey was completed, to be celebrated by the pursuit of a new one.

At age five I attended kindergarten for one day, was suspended for "recalcitrance", and didn't return. I refused to string wooden beads, and insisted on reading. But, reading wasn't appropriate because it didn't develop "small muscle coordination" which was considered of utmost importance for me at that age.

First grade was delightful. Mrs. Berry, and all of us danced, painted, wrote, sang, and read the year away. Second grade I skipped altogether. Third grade was apparently a time for "learning". I hated it. I was still in love with fun and fantasies, but I soon learned that school was not a place to do what one loved to do. It was a place to do what the teacher wanted me to do. I became a "poor student" that year—at least that's what was recorded on my report card in 1942. My teacher was very unhappy with me. I felt betrayed. It seemed, and still does, that the school had done its best to steal my bliss.

> *To the young mind everything is individual, stands by itself. By and by, it finds how to join two things and see in them one nature; then three, then three thousand; and so, tyrannized over by its own unifying instinct, it goes on tying things together, diminishing anomalies, discovering roots running under ground whereby contrary and remote things cohere and flower out from one stem.... Thus to him, to this schoolboy under the bending dome of day, is suggested that he and it proceed from one root; one is leaf and one is flower; relation, sympathy, stirring in every vein. And what is that root? Is not that the soul of his soul?*
>
> *...Yet hence arises a grave mischief. The sacredness which attaches to the act of creation, the act of thought, is transferred to the record. The poet chanting was felt to be a divine man: henceforth the chant is divine also. The writer was a just and wise spirit: henceforward it is settled, the book is perfect; as love of the hero corrupts into worship of his statue. Instantly the book becomes noxious: the guide is a tyrant. The sluggish and perverted mind of the multitude, slow to open to the incursions of Reason, having once so opened, having once received this book, stands upon it, and makes an outcry if it is disparaged. Colleges are built on it. Books are written on it not by "Man Thinking": by men of talent, that is, who start wrong, who set out from accepted dogmas, not from their own sight of principles. Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon, have given; forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote these books.*
>
> *—Ralph Waldo Emerson, The American Scholar, 1837.*

SCHOOLS OF CHOICE AS COMMUNITIES

by Alan Bonsteel, M.D.

For those of us who would build a better world, who would lend a hand to the AIDS victim in the American inner city, who would think of the day laborer in the far-off Crossroads shantytown as our neighbor, who would treat this planet as one would treat one's mother, the central issue is community. Is our purpose serving our own private gratifications, or are we all in this together, sharing the larger purpose of service to the greater good? The struggle between belonging and alienation, between meaning and emptiness, between connectedness and drift, is the central drama of our lives.

Having been active in the freedom in schooling movement for sixteen years, and having visited schools of choice in eleven countries, I contend that choice in schooling is crucial to building communities.

The most important attribute of any school is that experience of community, that sense in the students of belonging and of the camaraderie of learning, that the teachers are there for them, that their families are involved and will be heard. There was a time when public schools were such community schools, and some still are, but for most of us the suspicion has set in that the shattered windows are not a sign of lack of custodians but of profound alienation, and that the racial and class segregation inherent in assigning students to a particular school based on geographical residence will not go away.

In my years of work in the field, I have visited literally hundreds of schools of choice. In the United States, that has meant either low-cost private school alternatives, or, in a few isolated instances, charter schools. In the other Western democracies—Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Israel and others—schools of choice generally mean independent or "free" schools subsidized by the government at a fixed percentage of per-pupil expenditures in public schools. What I have seen again and again are schools that are under *neighborhood* and *local* control; that are on a human scale with a human face, and that take to heart Schumacher's dictum that "small is beautiful;" that embrace genuine workplace democracy, with far more creativity and professional satisfaction on the part of the teachers, that recognize that each child is an individual, with his or her unique needs that must be met and unique gifts that need to be nurtured; and that, as Henry David Thoreau expressed it, "March to the beat of a different drummer."

In 1987 I spent a month studying Denmark's system of educational freedom of choice, established more than 140 years ago by the great educator N.F.S. Grundtvig and encompassing such diverse alternatives as Steiner and Montessori schools. I remember especially a "Folkhighschool" of fine arts I visited on the Jutland peninsula. Although I arrived virtually unannounced, the students were all busily at work, and the school was neat and clean. The teacher saw my astonishment and commented, "You know, Alan, it is a joy to teach in this school because the students have *chosen* to be here and they *value* what we have to offer. " What I sensed in these students as I spoke with them was a passion for their art and an excitement and creativity that bonded them together in a true community that I could only envy.

I asked the teacher about discipline problems.

"Well," she said, "We have a hard time keeping some of them from smoking, because a few of our own teachers still smoke and I'd have to say it sets a bad example. And you know here in Denmark we have different cultural attitudes about sex than you do in the United States, so I imagine you might think of that as a discipline problem. We don't try to keep them from being sexually active, but we do teach responsibility and we have very explicit sex education classes. Most years we don't have any pregnancies, and our sexually transmitted disease rate is much lower than in American high schools. Serious discipline problems are truly unknown here. Even a mild reprimand is considered a severe. Remember, the kids *want* to be here because this is family for them."

In 1988, I spent a month studying Holland's system of choice in education, a right enshrined in their constitution and a source of intense pride to the Dutch people. After I'd looked up the superintendent of the Protestant independent schools, I told him, "Look, everybody knows you have superb schools for ordinary Dutch people. Show me your schools for your kids who are different, who live in poverty, who have special needs."

After he'd thought for a while, he said, "All right, I'll send you to the school for the trailer people. But don't expect too much. These are our toughest kids with the most problems. "

The "Trailer School" turned out to be on the outskirts of Rotterdam. A few hundred families lived a Gypsy lifestyle, returning from time to time to their home base, a dingy trailer court with rudimentary sanitation facilities. Lest one imagine that this was like a typical American mobile home park, these trailers were truly Lilliputian, so tiny that the average American would find them cramped even for a weekend trip, and towed by diminutive European-sized cars. The kids had every problem in the book, and would have given an American education bureaucrat plenty of excuses for failure: poverty, multi-ethnic backgrounds, Dutch as a second language, single-parent families, and worst of all, a lifestyle in which the kids would disappear with their parents for days or weeks and then reappear without explanation as to where they'd been.

And yet, I was once again blown away. The school was neat and tidy, and the kids were an inspiration. The fifth graders were already speaking English, and they courteously asked me why I had come all the way from the United States to visit their school.

After I'd toured the school, I met with the teachers.

"Our school is totally oriented toward working with the special problems of these transient kids," said one of the teachers. "We're always amazed at the way these families live—we're not even sure how some of them make a living. We think that when they go off wandering, they bring things back into the Netherlands they're not supposed to. All of the trailer people come here, and it's rare that we get anyone else."

"Could they go elsewhere if they wanted?" I asked.

"Of course. There are more spaces in the schools than there are students, so every school is trying to get more students to come. It's always in the back of our minds that they can leave any time they want. We always treat the parents courteously and with dignity, and listen carefully to their suggestions. And when we do that, we notice that they come around more often and take more interest in their children's education—at least when they're not off leading the Gypsy life!"

"There are five other schools within an easy walk that accept Dutch government scholarships," said another teacher. "But it's been two years since we've lost one of the trailer children to another school. This is *their* school—they understand that everything we do is for them. So they feel a sense of ownership."

Among the hundreds of schools of choice I have visited, for me a very special type of community is the school offering spiritually-based instruction, and the one I know best is the school of my own spiritual community, the Ananda village near Nevada City, California, where three hundred people live and work together in a meditation community. Although I don't live there myself, I return every year for a retreat, and from time to time I cover the family practice clinic so that the docs there can take a vacation. And sometimes when I get discouraged with the cynical and corrupt world of politics, I return to visit my friends at the school and remind myself of why I have worked so long and so hard the last sixteen years for freedom in schooling.

At the Ananda school, the focus is on education for life rather than memorization, a philosophy that teaching responsibility and service and respect for others is more important than rote learning. And I see in the students a sense of community of the deepest and most intense kind, where they share the experience of life as an exciting journey, with an ever-expanding sense of oneness with the world, and where they strive to see everything that happens to them as having a purpose, however cleverly hidden at the time.

A friend of mine who teaches at the Ananda school told me a story that epitomizes what a school of this kind can offer.

"The local national forest has a program where school kids can spend a day planting trees," she said. "On the day we went out there, the forest rangers couldn't believe what they saw. Our kids were far more focused than any they'd ever had before. The rangers had their best men out there with automatic hole-drillers, and they still couldn't stay ahead of us! We finished early in the day after we'd run out of trees to plant."

"I'll never forget the look on the head ranger's face at the end of the day," she recounted. "He said, 'Those kids were planting trees like their lives depended on it, and then they were watering them out of their canteens. I even saw some of them stop to pray for the trees they'd planted. And you know, I think those little trees are going to grow real good.'"

For our lower-income minority groups in the United States, schools of choice have almost always been Catholic parochial schools, where the average yearly tuition nationwide is only $1457. There are a few exceptions like the Marcus Garvey school in Los Angeles, or Polly Williams' voucher plan in Milwaukee, or the public school choice plan in East Harlem. But schools of choice in the United States, unlike in the other Western democracies, have largely been limited to wealthier families. It is not surprising that the groups that have been most hurt by being restricted to low-quality, dangerous, alienating traditional public schools, Blacks and Hispanics, have been shown in poll after poll to be the strongest supporters of school choice.

The 1947 United Nations declaration of universal human rights establishes freedom in schooling as a fundamental right, but that doesn't mean much to a low-income family unable to pay private school tuition. The single parent who empties the wastebasket at night should have the same right to choose, the same right to quality education for his or her children, as the big shot in the penthouse office.

The evidence that school choice produces higher academic results and lower dropout rates is overwhelming, but the issue goes far beyond simply a question of quality. There is a creativity, an energy, a vitality in schools of choice. There is a commitment that comes from having freely chosen. The right to choose carries with it a dignity, a sense of community, a shared purpose. Neighborhood schools of choice will bring us together.

Alan Bonsteel is a Family Practitioner from San Francisco, California and has been a leader in the educational choice movement for sixteen years. In his accompanying letter he says:

I am writing you at the suggestion of my friend Dr. Carlos Bonilla [whom we at ΣΚΟΛΕ know and love as a contributor who is a passionately eloquent writer and advocate of truth and justice for all children, not just for his beloved Hispanic constituency!] .

Enclosed for your journal on education is **an original, exclusive, never-before-published article.**

Thanks, Carlos—and thanks, Alan! I've put your article here among the reprinted articles, not because it isn't original, but because it points up the value and importance of the Folk School movement, among other things!

The reprinted article that follows also mentions Grundtvig and the folkhighschools of Denmark as the inspiration for their own populist educational movement in Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

From *Option, Journal of the Folk Education Association of America*, Volume 17, No. 2, Fall, 1993, pp. 7-9.

THE ANTIGONISH MOVEMENT AND ITS TEAM

adapted from an article by Beverly B. Cassara
and the chapter "Moses Coady and Antigonish" in
***Twentieth Century Thinkers in Adult Education*,**
edited by Peter Jarvis

In the small town of Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada, a movement started in 1921 which is known world-wide today as the Coady International Institute at St. Francis Xavier University. The Institute, through extension work and seminars at the University, offers leadership training to adult educators and lay people worldwide, and especially in the countries of the Third World.

The Antigonish Movement began as a response to conditions of severe economic deprivation in the fishing, farming, and coal-mining province of Nova Scotia, in the years just following the first World War. Dr. James J. Tompkins, a professor at St. Francis Xavier University, believed that "the college should go to those who could not come to it and ... demanded a new kind of popular education." He brought fifty-one men, mostly farmers, to attend the first "People's School" at the University and this impulse continued until Tompkins was transferred to parish work, three years later.

The impulse continued to hold the interest of Nova Scotia clergymen, and in 1928 the Scottish Catholic Society of Canada voted to fund an Extension Department at the University. Dr. Moses M. Coady, another professor at the University, and A. B. MacDonald acted as a team to set up the new program.

The movement was based on six principles: the primacy of the individual, social reform through education, education beginning with the economic, education through group action, social reform involving fundamental change in social and economic institutions, and improved quality of life for all.

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In "The Antigonish Way," Father Coady summed up the philosophy thus:

> "What is the social philosophy?... the conviction of these pioneers that the old order was simply not a good order. It was unkind to the great masses of the people even in the best of times. The kind of life it gave, even to the most fortunate among the masses, was not good. It was insecure. It engendered a social atmosphere which impeded Christian living for our people. These pioneer thinkers were tired of busts and booms; tired of false and empty prestige; of people making themselves great by making others small; tired of seeing some people get what they did not need and could not use... They were moved by the thought that there could be life for all, that men should not knock down their fellowmen in their effort at getting life for themselves. Rather should men free themselves in the true freedom of all human beings."

Extension professors, familiar with local conditions, went to a region and held a mass meeting to explain how people could help themselves through education. Study clubs were organized and assisted to choose relevant problems and find ways to study them. Printed and other media resources were supplied to these clubs, which met in farm kitchens or wherever they could find space. The study clubs met together as a larger group periodically—the ones related to a community met monthly, and all those of a region annually. There were also annual rural and industrial conferences held at the University, and a six-week course for teachers there. (It is this teachers' school which constitutes the main thrust of the Coady Institute today.)

The study clubs became the basis of a great new impetus in the Cooperative Movement. Farmers started fertilizer co-ops, livestock and shipping clubs; fishermen started cooperative canneries; businessmen started credit unions; employee cooperatives were synthesized with the labor movement. Eventually, a cooperative newspaper, "The Maritime Cooperator" was published. Traveling libraries supplied books, and the Extension Department developed pamphlets on a variety of subjects.

The program was floated from the beginning by an army of volunteers. Dr. Coady in his book *Masters of Their Own Destiny* explained how Dr. Tompkins got the volunteer program started:

> So the first movement in a community is to go into the community and try to get somebody who's interested; one man, probably a clergyman, then three men, or two men and a woman. You sell them the idea, I call that buttonholing the people; that's what Dr. Tompkins was strong on. His personal attack was with an individual, then three individuals, and then he fed them pamphlets and literature and then he talked to them and he'd meet them the next day: 'Did you read that?' 'No, I didn't.' He'd meet them the next day, if they hadn't read it he'd go over to the house and read it for them. Now that's the first move.

Although Tompkins, Coady, and MacDonald are usually named as the prime movers in this adult education project, it included others, and the movement is spoken of always as a team. Some of those included were Sister Mary Michael, Sister Anselm, Kay (Thompson) Desjardins, Alex S. McIntyre, and Miss T. Sears. It appears that MacDonald and others like him were primarily responsible for the direct work, the nitty-gritty, in organizing study clubs and cooperatives, while Coady, a big, impressive man (6 ft. 4 inches and ruggedly built to match) was the charismatic, enthusiastic promoter, the one who held the diverse parts of the Movement together, the "chief guide and mentor of the work," the power behind the necessary publicity, the "Pied Piper". Called "the Giant of Margaree", Coady "thought big and talked big... He was a new and disturbing figure, both on the maritime scene and in the ranks of the Catholic Church." Before his death in 1957, Father Coady was serving as a consultant to the United Nations work relevant to adult education.

Adult education and cooperation do not make folks rich, therefore in Nova Scotia today one does not find vast wealth as a result of the Antigonish Movement. Such wealth indeed would be anathema to the movement. Instead, one finds pleasant, modest, well-cared-for communities, with little evidence of poverty. The people are industrious and proud of their heritage and they do not take it kindly when affluent outsiders come in to try to buy up real estate.

In their insistence on the necessity of empowering the common people themselves, through education and encouragement, Tompkins, Coady, and McDonald were preaching the same gospel that Myles Horton stood for in the southern United States, the same one Grundtvig and the Scandinavian folk high school pioneers had facilitated, almost a hundred years earlier—and the same one that our current educational reformers seem not to have heard very clearly. Can the voice of "trickle-up" instead of "trickle-down" education finally be heard effectively?

> *Think of the kind of world you want to live and work in. What do you need to know to build the world? Demand that your teachers teach you that.*
>
> *—Prince Peter Kropotkin*

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This just in from *The Utne Reader*::

JOURNAL OF FAMILY LIFE: A QUARTERLY FOR EMPOWERING FAMILIES

($16/yr., 4 issues, 72 Philip St. Albany, NY 12202;
518/432-1578).

In this era of so-called family values, misplaced religious ideals, and misused statistics, people involved with the Albany, New York, Free School have come forward with a magazine offering an outlook that is both truer and richer. The Free School people have been walking their talk of respect for and faith in human nature since the 1970s, and they offer companionship and support to all who treasure family life as an opportunity for authenticity and growth.

This hefty, homegrown journal is crammed with personal accounts from community members, as well as interviews with and articles by enlightened thinkers such as Thomas Moore, Eve and Reb Zalman, Richard Rohr, Helen Nearing, and John Taylor Gatto. The first issue was devoted to children, the second to couples. Future themes will include reproduction, loss and grieving, spirituality, money, and grandparents. *Journal of Family Life* urges us to look beyond the answers proclaimed by the institutions of the dominant culture and regain confidence in our own instincts.

—Andrea Martin

Yay, Andrea! You may subscribe to the **Journal of Family Life** *by sending in the coupon. on page 115. If you'd like a package deal,* **JFL** *and* **ΣΚΟΛΕ** *are sister journals, and a sustaining sub at $25 to one buys you a free year's subscription to the other! Order now! When renewal time comes up, so do the prices, because of increased costs of printing and mailing!*

Four reviews by Chris Mercogliano:

The School Around Us
by Claudia Berman
Published by School Around Us Press, 1994
Kennebunkport, ME (\$18.95 paper)

Here is the well written story of the creation and then the ensuing transmutations over the next twenty-five years of one of the several hundred independent, experimental schools which together comprise the most recent movement to break down the monolith of public compulsory education in this country. The School Around Us was founded in 1970 by a small group of Kennebunkport parents who were dissatisfied with their local public schools and who had grown tired of trying to change them. Claudia Berman tells the school's story from her point of view beginning with her arrival in 1979 as a teacher and later as a parent of children attending the school. She was able to thoroughly reconstruct the early years of the school via newspaper articles and extensive interviews with initial parents, teachers and students.

I particularly enjoyed the way in which the author tied the school's origins in with what was going on in the nation at that momentous time in our history, and also how the events in her own life led her to this little community school on the rocky coast of Maine. This highly readable book should prove useful to anyone considering starting, teaching in, or enrolling their kids in a school of this kind. In addition to covering the history of the School Around Us, Berman does a good job of explaining the school's philosophy, goals and structure, and how the school evolved over time in response to the changing needs of its constituency. Like our own school here in Albany, N.Y., the School Around Us was begun without any single source of inspiration or guidance, instead gradually developing its own way of being and doing school through disagreement, debate and large doses of trial and error. Claudia Berman's book, which began as her master's thesis, stands as an excellent addition to the scant literature documenting the free school movement of the latter part of the twentieth century.

Self-Schoolers Network News
Edited by Zoë Blöwen-Ledoux
Subscriptions: \$10, 8 issues (10 pages, handmade)

How about a nationally-distributed education newsletter put out by a fourteen year-old who is also currently on the Board of Directors of the Maine Home Education Association? "Editor, Publisher, Correspondent, Shipper, Graphics coordinator, and Stamp licker Zoë Blöwen-Ledoux puts out this inviting morsel "whenever we please, (which is) about 4 or 5 times a year."

There is an amazing array of stuff squeezed into this little 'zine, as she calls it: an interview with a fifteen year-old violinist who recently spent three weeks in Russia, two articles on television, a report on Zoë's week at *Growing Without Schooling Magazine* and an excellent resources page.

Her submissions policy sums up the wonderful free spirit of this not-to-be-missed little newsletter: "Send all articles about the places you've been, educational experiments, how you live your dreams and goals and how you organize your life. Also you can now send b/w photos! SSNN depends on **you** to make this 'zine interesting reading." This is a grass-roots publication truly worth supporting. Zoë's address is:

Self-Schoolers Network News
RR 1 Box 452, Lisbon Falls, ME 04252

The Parenting Path,

A Newsletter for Sharing the Spiritual Journey with Children
Published by Susan Bagby
Subscriptions: $25.00 (16 pgs. bi-monthly)

Volume I, Number I of this unique magazine just recently came our way. The focus of the inaugural issue is prayer, and it contains a number of interesting short articles. The cover piece is on different ways to pray with your children. Inside there are also two pages of beautiful prayers from around the world, interviews with a seven and a nine year-old about the nature and function of prayer in their lives, a profile of a veteran Montessori teacher who now gives workshops nationwide on the subject of nurturing children's spirituality, a resource page and a calendar of daily affirmations for parents.

All in all, this non-sectarian new publication looks like a pretty interesting response to this increasingly despiritualized world of ours. It can be had by writing to:

Bagby Publishing
1712 Escalona Dr.
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Natural Life,
Resources for Self-Reliant Living
Published by The Alternate Press, Wendy Priesnitz, editor.
Subscriptions: $21.00 (16 pgs. newsprint, bi-monthly)

Believe it or not, the *Mother Earth News* lives on in this newspaper which was established way back in 1976 by Canadian writer Wendy Priesnitz, author of several books on homeschooling and self-sufficiency. It is packed full of well-written articles on environmental law, how to build a cordwood house, permaculture and organic farming, how to save your own seed, parenting, and an easy way for homeschoolers to keep necessary records—by the Alliance for Parental Involvement in Education (AllPIE)'s own Katharine Houk. There is also an excellent two-page resource and event directory listed by province or state, and a two-page listing of books that are available from Priesnitz' organization. Her address is:

Natural Life
RR 1, St. George, Ontario, Canada, N0E 1N0 or
PO Box 60, Lewiston, N.Y. 14092-0060 USA

> ***Implicit in right education is the cultivation of freedom and intelligence, which is not possible if there is any form of compulsion, with its fears. After all, the concern of the educator is to help the student to understand the complexities of his whole being. To require him to suppress one part of his nature for the benefit of some other part is to create in him an endless conflict which results in social antagonisms. It is intelligence that brings order, not discipline. Conformity and obedience have no place in the right kind of education.***
>
> ***—Jiddu Krishnamurti***

As we went to press, the following story came across our desk, and just demanded to be included.

DISNEY'S POCAHONTAS

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FILM REVIEW:
Reprinted from the *Detroit Metro Times*:

NATIVE SIN
Is Disney's *Pocahontas* yet another cultural injustice against American Indians?
by Don Ruedisueli

Expressing deep philosophical reservations about a Disney cartoon places one in a difficult position. At best, you look like the little mouse flipping his middle finger to the descending eagle. More likely, people will see you as a joyless fanatic who needs to get a life.

But even as a reviewer who saw no racism or homophobia in *The Lion King*, I cannot accept how the latest animated hit to roll out of the Disney juggernaut, *Pocahontas*, tramples the truth. Even giving the creators the benefit of the doubt as to which road they were paving with their intentions, Pocahontas is one of this decade's biggest cases of cultural imperialism.

Try as Disney might to make a positive film about Native Americans, the company has done a great disrespect to one particular person, Pocahontas, and thus to all of her people. The problem is pretending it is in any way biographical by calling the movie *Pocahontas*.

In fact, Disney's story is almost pure fiction, based on folklore rather than reality, even though the studio says this is its first animated film inspired by "a historical figure."

By portraying a romance between Pocahontas and Capt. John Smith, the film diverges radically from actual events—events the movie's huge cultural impact will all but obliterate in the minds of American youth.

"It's like rewriting history," says Jamie Mullins, a resident of Walled Lake, Mich., who says she's a descendant of Pocahontas. "Can you imagine a fictional story in which Anne Frank and a Nazi are suddenly lovers? I don't think it's appropriate."

Perhaps a more authentic perspective of Pocahontas' life is depicted by the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, a state-run organization in Williamsburg, Va., which has chronicled the life of the legend in a small permanent exhibit titled, "Pocahontas: Symbol of a New World".

According to Debby Padgett, spokeswoman for the project, 17th-century European engravings depict Pocahontas "as about age 11" when she met Capt. Smith. In 1607, her father, Chief Powhatan, saved the British settlers in Virginia by giving them food (perhaps in an effort to draw them into his Powhatan Confederacy of some 30 Algonquian speaking tribes in coastal Virginia), and Pocahontas was a regular deliverer of this charity. In exchange for this aid, the British colonizers burned the Indians' crops and slaughtered them. By the 1700s, a Powhatan civilization of some 14,000 was reduced to mere hundreds (today they again number several thousand in Virginia).

The myth about Pocahontas saving Smith's life also has little credibility. Smith did not write, in his memoirs of those years, of the alleged incident in which Pocahontas supposedly threw herself in front of Smith as her father was about to execute him with a club. Neither did any of his comrades record such an incident.

Smith first told the tale in 1624, after Pocahontas' death, when she was regarded as royalty in England and thus had some coattails he could ride. Mullins claims that Smith also wrote that two other women saved his life in similar incidents.

Scholars on Virginia history offer another explanation of Pocahontas' famous rescue of Smith. According to Nancy Egloff, research historian for the

Jamestown Settlement, the foundation's museum, the incident closely paralleled an Algonquian adoption ritual.

In her article, "Pocahontas: Powhatan's 'Only Nonpareil,'" Egloff says that when Powhatan raised two stones to beat Smith's head, "Most likely, Powhatan wanted to assert his sovereignty over the captured Englishman in order to impress upon Smith the power he held over the English in Virginia. Through this event, Pocahontas became Smith's sponsor, and symbolically, his 'sister.'"

Far from being a Mel Gibson kind of guy, Capt. Smith was a mercenary who apprenticed in oppression in Ireland, and used to kidnap Powhatan children regularly. According to David Stannard's *American Holocaust*, Smith once wrote that his Indian victims were "craftie, timorous, quicke of apprehension, and very ingenuous. Some are of disposition fearefull, some bold, most cautelous [deceitful], all Savage.... Their chief God they worship is the Divell."

After a few years, Smith left Virginia, and, according to Egloff, Pocahontas soon after disappeared from Jamestown. It was William Strachey, an early secretary of Virginia, whose writings shed some light on subsequent events in the life of the Native American princess.

Strachey recorded that following Smith's departure, Pocahontas had married an Indian warrior named Kocoum. But by 1613, she was living by herself in a village in northern Virginia. It was there that Capt. Samuel Argall, Smith's successor, discovered her and had her kidnapped "for the ransoming of so many Englishmen as were prisoners with Powhatan," wrote Strachey. Even though Powhatan released seven British prisoners, he refused to meet all of the ransom demands, so his daughter was never released. Instead, she was "converted" to Christianity and baptized with the Christian name, Rebecca

Mullins believes the English kept Pocahontas alive only so she would marry an Englishman: "I don't know what constitutes torture to other people, but being told you're a demon and a savage and being dunked under water every day fits my definition."

While still a captive in April 1614, Pocahontas married British tobacco merchant John Rolfe. In 1616 the couple visited England, where the Virginia Co. exploited Pocahontas to gain investors.

Indeed, Egloff describes how Pocahontas was used to help recruit settlers to Virginia, and how, while living in London, "Pocahontas' living expenses were paid by the Virginia Company." When she ran into Smith in England, she was enraged by this reminder of his actions in Virginia.

"Even for a fiction story, that's not the spirit Disney captures," Mullins says.

As Rose Palmer notes in the book *North American Indians*, while Rolfe and Pocahontas prepared to return to Virginia in 1617, Pocahontas died of smallpox in the port of Gravesend. She was 21 or 22.

She and Rolfe had a son, Thomas, whom Rolfe abandoned at Gravesend, but who eventually made his way back to the New World. Many prominent Virginia families trace their ancestry to Thomas.

Disney's film portrays Pocahontas at a maturity she never reached, in her mid- to late 20s, comparable in age to Capt. Smith. Rolfe is never mentioned.

The movie's opening does make clear that the British had two interests in Virginia: finding gold and killing Indians. Smith is portrayed as an ace killer of "savages," a swell kind of misdirected guy.

Pocahontas is presented as a maverick, preferring the company of a raccoon named Meeko and a bird named Flit to her fellow villagers. These animals don't "talk," but they gesture and carry on just short of that point. For verbal advice, Pocahontas consults a talking willow tree.

Ironically, personalizing these natural characters is the Disney tradition that most closely parallels the Native American philosophy, yet Pocahontas' relationships with the three don't seem at all spiritual—a missed opportunity.

Pocahontas and Smith meet when he almost shoots her. When they meet again, she understands his language through the spontaneous combustion of magic, and they fall in love.

Eventually, a clandestine meeting between the two is interrupted and ends with the death of one of Pocahontas' fellow villagers, setting the stage for her to save Smith's life and thus avert war in the film's climax.

"Why would she want to save the life of the man who was destroying her people?" Mullins asks. "You'd have to be mad." The backdrop to the love story is indeed madness—the growing prejudice, paranoia, greed and violence on the part of the British settlers, a combined force so great the filmmakers also spread it among the Powhatans, bringing them down a moral notch or two for the sake of equality. The ending is fairly predictable, though Pocahontas and Smith do not remain a couple.

As a family film, *Pocahontas* presents a strong heroine and some simple lessons about prejudice. Aside from British soldiers wearing Spanish armor, it's pretty inoffensive stuff. That's what Disney sells, and it's beside the point. In a just world, Disney would have told the story accurately or not at all.

Mullins argues this fantasy could have been told without the name Pocahontas. Indeed it should have been, since Pocahontas was not able to prevent the genocide of her people. "They shouldn't have made a film with the title 'Pocahontas' about that historical period," says Mullins. "To confuse the facts with this dehumanized image whitewashes the genocide. It's just wrong.

"The British never had any intention of being kind and neighborly to the Powhatans, even though the Powhatans initially welcomed them. How Disney gets this fairy-tale romance, I don't know.... I'd rather make my own peace with Pocahontas' life than have Disney shove a whole other life down my throat."

The omnipresent film merchandising exacerbates the problem for Mullins and her family.

"We don't have a chance to ignore this," she says. "When people start mocking the people you come from—not just your tribe, but specific ancestors—how do you go into a grocery store with the cereal boxes promoting the movie? It's hard enough dealing with her legacy. It's going to be very difficult to have this eroticized cartoon speaking for someone who can't speak for herself. It's very unpleasant."

James Pentecost, who produced *Pocahontas*, studied history at Michigan State University, indulging his passion for America's past. He doesn't consider Mullins' concerns trivial. "It's a difficult issue," he says. "We were faced with the same kind of problems anyone faces in doing a biography—in our case, condensing a life into a 70-minute musical. So we did what anyone does—you go for the essence. I do think we represented the Powhatan Indians' conflict with the British."

Pentecost studied the materials on Pocahontas and Smith with a "filter," knowing how victors like to rewrite history. He acknowledges Smith really was "a braggart and not a very nice person," but says the divergences from reality in the script are part of good old-fashioned storytelling and still preserve the spirit of the tale.

"It's a movie that ends on a question mark, which allows parents and teachers to tell the rest of the story," Pentecost says. "I guarantee you more history classes will be discussing Pocahontas in the next year than have in the previous 400." But Mullins has little confidence those discussions will involve much more than a showing of the *Pocahontas* video to students.

"Disney's going to beat us to the punch and no one is going to bother to learn anything different about this.... You cannot get a piece of history from people who are colonizers. If you've got something ugly in your past, no one's going to make you look at it.

"It's important," Pentecost observes "that we don't confuse going to the movies with reading and going to school.... This is a work of imagination based on history."

But the issue already has been confused in our culture, and Pentecost's sincere hope that Pocahontas won't be anyone's sole source of information about Pocahontas is naive.

And obtaining public justice for Pocahontas is only part of the problem. "It's not specific to Powhatans; it's all indigenous people all over the world," Mullins says.

"*Pocahontas* is just a blip overall. But Disney's going to make so much money off this, and what are they going to do for Indian people?"

MEANS TO AN END
Native American actor defends Pocahontas

Russell Means has yet to have a bad experiemce with Hollywood. A Native American activist and an actor in films such as *Last of the Mohicans*, *Wagons East* and now *Pocahontas*, he says no one has treated him poorly in Tinseltown.

That doesn't mean he was initially happy with the script for *Pocahontas*, in which he is the voice of Chief Powhatan. "but knowing the effect Disney has on kids, I went to the audition hoping to get the part and make changes," Means says. "And, wonder of wonders, they were very amenable to all of my suggestions."

Means is a very self-assured speaker, perhaps the result of having faced death for more than two months at the Siege of Wounded Knee. As a leader of the American Indian Movement, he was one of the organizers of the deadly face-off against federal agents in 1973. One would think such experience would lend credibility to a film in which he appears.

"I don't go into anything about my people without doing research," Means says. "*Pocahontas* is based on historical fact. There are eleven stories about Pocahontas, but only two I would give any credence to"—those of John Smith and his fellow Virginia settlers.

Despite the film's divergence even from the facts Means accepts, he calls it the best movie yet about Native Americans. "My take on this film is not whether it's politically correct or historically accurate to the nth degree. I feel sadness for those who do, because of their loss of innocence and total repression of the child within ...

"There are four things that make this the best story Hollywood has ever produced about Indians, and which make it revolutionary," he says. "For Indian people to ever be treated with respect, Americans have to admit to their historical deceit, and this film does it. It begins with it, saying why Englishmen came over here in the first place—to rob, rape and pillage the land, and kill Indians."

Secondly, Means says the film emphasizes that animals have their own personalities and feelings (not exactly a new idea in the Disney canon). Third, as in *The Lion King*, this philosophy also is being applied to the land and elements.

"The fourth thing, which I feel is most important, is the children of the world are going to be introduced to my people through the woman. Pocahontas is smarter than the wise men and her father, and she stops a war. The children are going to leave with nothing but positive images of life."

Don Ruedisueli is a regular freelancer for the **Detroit Metro Times,** *where this story first appeared*

LETTERS:

We also received the letter that follows, and an enclosure, at the last moment—and absolutely had to include it! John Froebel-Parker is a friend of ΣΚΟΛΕ and of the New Jersey Modern School, and a contributor. We don't really much like being in the editorial position of seeming to side with John Gatto in his lumpingJohn's ancestor along with Kaiser Friedrich and Graf Otto von Bismarck as responsible for the evils of our American public education system. This strikes me as a bit like blaming the acorn for the oak tree that falls on your house! John T. acknowledges my objection to his equation, saying, "I know Mary will hand me my hat if I..., but ..." so I'm not accusing him of *total* prejudice here, only of a certain degree of dramatic license which is hard on John F-P. He faults Unitarians and Quakers too, so it's not all on poor old Froebel.

Mary—

Though you'd like to read this. If you'd like to run it you have my permission and am sure NY Post would say yes too.

Love, John Froebel-Parker

Gingrich

Friedrich Wilhelm August Fröbel
1782-1852
Founder of first Kindergarten

NEW YORK POST

June 27, 1995.

NEWT'S LANGUAGE PROBLEM

Listening to Newt Gingrich condescendingly remark that "everyone who comes to America as an immigrant already has their second language and now needs to learn their first" ("Newt wants English...," news story June 8) leads me to believe he is monolingual.

After two generations in the U.S., I still speak German, socialize in German, and pray in German. When I go to church, the prayer book is in German. Will America truly "disintegrate" because I am part of a "multicultural model"?

My ancestor, Friedrich Froebel, began the first kindergarten in Germany. It was multi-cultural; it was the first school to take in Christian and Jewish children. The Kaiser banned it. Then Hitler banned it. Mr. Gingrich needs to learn another language—humility.

—John Froebel-Parker, Albany

Picnic!

Four friends

LIZ WERTHEIM
4150 Hana Highway, Haiku,
Maui, HI 96708 808 573 1819

May 22, 1995

Dear Mary Leue,

As you may know, CORAL is on hold right now and I am jobless. I looked at what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. I realized that for thirteen years I have focused on two interrelated fields of interest—my own inner growth, (physical, emotional and spiritual) and the education of young children. In both areas, the question was: "What are the ingredients that allow an individual to develop in a total and wholesome way... to grow, healthily, through each unfolding stage?"

I have put the enclosed brochure together. I am sending it to you with the intention of asking your assistance in promoting myself. ...

I appreciate ΣΚΟΛΕ very much. I apologize for not being able to buy a larger subscription.

With love and Aloha to you,
Liz

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Liz attended the August 1994 conference of democratic schools at Sudbury Valley School and is a strong advocate of the Sudbury model.

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"What is the optimum environment for the growth of each human being?" Liz's studies of this question include seventeen years integrating and delivering the Receiving Course (formerly The Clearing Course) as well as a Masters degree in Early Childhood Ed; Eductivism; Mind, clearing with John O Maui, a cooperative resource and learning center.

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Liz was an administrator and parent/particapant in the Hui Preschool, Maui; co-founder of CORAL, Ohana Self studies in conflict resolution, brain based learning, multiple intelligences, family therapy, learning environments in other cultures, sustainable ecology and more.

Liz comes to the Mainland twice each year or client may come to Maui. Accommodations in the rural community where Liz lives will be arranged.

For more information write Liz Wertheim at

50 Hana Hwy, Haiku HI 96708
or CALL 808-573-1819
e-mail Liz.Wertheim@TDP.org
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Editorial Staff
Mary Leue
Chris Mercogliano
Larry Becker
Connie Frisbee Houde
Betsy Mercogliano
Ellen Becker

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Connie Frisbee Houde
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FOR KIDS ONLY

I hope you enjoy this issue. This is the second kids' issue, and we've got some great stuff—stories, journals, poems. Hope you enjoy them. I've heard that a number of kids liked Ian's "Blind Mouse"—well, here he is back with an even longer story, "Time Machine," which may even have a sequel, if Ian doesn't get too involved with other projects. Or maybe one of *you* could find Flank for us?

My little Swiss/English friend Till has let us have a story with great illustrations. It's a real adventure story. I loved reproducing the pictures and fitting them in. Please send us some stories of your own, OK?

Also, Ian tells me that he has a pen pal in Bristol, England, and Ian's father told me the other day that they are going to take a trip to England in December or so, and among other things, will visit Ian's pen pal! Also an English kid named Theo he met when Theo and his parents were visiting the farm in Ashfield, Massachusetts, where Ian lives. Theo lives in London, and Ian and his family will stay with Theo's family there!

You know, with the speed of airplane travel, whether it is to England—or Puerto Rico, like the Free School kids—or to Russia, where Jerry Mintz sometimes takes American kids when he goes there to visit schools—the world is really very small, and you don't have to be a millionaire to go places. Our kids raised $5,000 for their Puerto Rican trip! Ted explains how they did it, in his journal on page 26. Maybe you can get your family or your schoolmates or even your church class to do something like that, as Gaby did (see page 27). That's why I put all those African kids' names and addresses, starting on page 30. Write someone a letter! You may be surprised what you get back!

Next kids' issue: spring, 1996. Deadline for contributions, February 15, 1996. Don't wait!

EDITORIAL COMMENT FOR "ADULTS"

First things first:

If you move, please send us your new address because your journal will not be forwarded.

Explanation: We'd *love* to forward your copy, but the post office charges us 50¢ every time they return one for lack of a new address—and they've now stopped even doing the forwarding, even if they *do* put on the address change sticker when they return the journal! We had to learn that the hard way, by paying out mucho moola for returned *Journals of Family Life*.

Next order of importance (my priorities!): the new look of the name *ΣΚΟΛΗ*. It's how it should *really* be rendered in Greek, because the "H" is really a long "e." It just looks like an "H." When I found out, having wondered for years, by asking my little brother, who is a Greek scholar, he told me, yes, it really should be *ΣΚΟΛΗ*—but I decided not to change it, because it's still a bit reminiscent of English as it is now. And I'm still not going to change it just because you Greek scholars know it's wrong, OK? So writing it as *ΣΚΟΛΗ* was a one-time deal just to let you know I'm not a dummy! Ego booster!

Look: a Greek scholar I ain't! I got fascinated with the Greek alphabet, as I did with the Cyrillic (Russian, etc.), when I was an undergraduate—and my favorite professor taught a course in Greek literature in translation, which I took. And I also took a course in Greek philosophy. So when I discovered Symbol font, I thought, wow! And when the name SKOLE was proposed for this journal as suggesting an attitude toward learning as a life-long process, I decided to spell it in Greek letters, since it was a Platonic—or Socratic—concept. You know, the Academy, which was a kind of men's' house-party-cum-seminar, according to Plutarch. So I typed it out via Symbol font and it came out *ΣΚΟΛΕ*!

Well, along comes Elisabeth Forbush and her Kalepaedeia kids, and now their literary/arts magazine, *Μνημοσυνη*.

Elisabeth throws me a challenge (see the commentary on their poems at the end of the issue) to unpack this Greek name! Great! I love challenges. At least I can read the Greek: Mnemosine! I remember the word "mnemonic," meaning a memory jogger, and then I think, ah! Mnemosine. The goddess of memory! Hm, who is she in the pantheon, one of the muses? I end up looking her up in my Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.

Hey: she's a TITAN—and MOTHER of all the muses *by Zeus!* Makes sense, when you think how primeval memory really is, how uncontrollably all-pervasive! If repressed memory (which he calls a "complex") plays the critical role in determining the quality of human life that Jung, a great believer in the reality of Greek archetypes, says it does (and I believe them!), then Memory is surely a goddess—and a primeval one to boot, as the Titans are characterized in Webster's dictionary!

The Titans, if you remember, are the children of Uranus and Gaea. One of them is Kronos, who marries Rhea, and Zeus is their *son*. So if Mnemosine is a Titan, doesn't that make her Zeus' aunt? Hmm. Zeus, the dictionary tells me, is, among other things, the promulgator of the moral law. Whoo, how times have changed. Well, I just wanted you to have a bit of historical mythology—or mythological history! See why teaching Greek mythology is so much fun with kids?

Speaking of mythology, I am getting all sorts of adumbrations from Ted Strunck's article, "The Bridge." That's why it's on the cover! We have an interview with Malidoma Somé in the Fall issue of the *Journal of Family Life*, and decided to use Ted's magnificent image of the completed bridge as an accompanying illustration, a metaphor for what our entire culture is undergoing just now, as the millennium draws to a close! Somé has been spoken of as a "bridge" over the gulf that exists presently between Western—American included!—and other cultures, in his case, traditional African tribal culture. Ted writes that his account is "a very nuts and bolts kind of piece without the poetry and miraculousness that the bridge is." "Maybe," he adds, "the pictures will help." Well, I think he's wrong! I lost the first mailing he sent last winter, which included these marvelous pictures, and I *still* got a kind of "frisson"—like, whoa, what's going on here?—of the *numinous-*

ness (meaning "at the level of Mind (*nous* —*νουσ*, in Greek))—of this accomplishment, from reading his words alone! Later, I found the original and got to look at the pictures. They confirmed what I already knew.

Anyhow, it's a marvelous image, a marvelous accomplishment!

Similarly magnificent is Adam Adler's write-up of his week at the Free School in Albany, and the recommendations he makes for changes in teacher training methods. This guy came into the school sight unseen, not even his first choice!—and did what only a very few people have done with his time with us. Interestingly, one of the others was a Canadian as well—from Quebec. Adam's article is well worth reading, not just or even primarily as a description of our school but as a human commentary on how kids are when adults let them BE who they are!

Bill Kaul's article, "Witchcraft, Madness and the Freshman English Requirement," comes from his own warm heart and from his white-hot belly—in fact, from his sense of "helpless rage, hopeless love," as he terms the short piece that follows. Bill has his own inner idiom based, like the poetry of Walt Whitman, on his own authentic selfhood, on the sensitive awareness he carries of the horrifying gap we permit to exist between what we could be and do, and what we allow to go on happening, no matter how many innocent people we may ignore or even help destroy, most of them members of some minority, many of them children or women!

* * *

On the other hand, I got a note recently from a guy named Bill Ellis, from Rangeley, Maine, who has been putting out TRANET, a compendium of international publications about a whole congeries of topics involving human and environmental welfare. I value his friendship and support. Bill says,

> Thanks for the recent issue of SKOLE. It's going home with me to read at more leisure. But I'm getting overfilled with the critiques of the monopolistic teaching systems. We need to move beyond criticism and invent the future learning system. That's what I'll be looking for in SKOLE. My own vision of the

> LEARNING COMMUNITY is enclosed in the attached. If you know of others who move beyond criticism, alternative schools and homeschooling, I would like to hear of them. KEEP UP YOUR GOOD WORKS.
>
> —Bill Ellis

I've written a response to him, but I thought some of you might like to take it on too. His address is:

Bill Ellis c/o TRANET
PO Box 567
Rangeley, ME 04970

There are a lot of other articles in this issue you're going to like, including Robert Kastelic's account of letting his kids launch out on their own during a mountain hike, Ron Dultz's humanistic analysis of what it takes to be a good teacher, Nat Needle's compassionate and all-encompassing piece on the principles upon which alternative (or any!) education need to be based—and lots of other gems. Enjoy! And when you're done, either save it as a reference or else pass it on! A lot of university and school libraries now have either a full or partial set on their shelves. Graduate students are reading it on microfiche! The word is getting out. Write me an article. Write about your school. Whatever.

TIME MACHINE

by Ian Leue

Chapter 1
Tomorrow

That was it. I, John Flixton, just had to make a time machine. The rest of my friends didn't believe in them and neither did my parents. I repeat, 'that was it'. I was going to do it that evening before my mom had finished supper and while my dad was all caught up in the newspaper.

Later that evening I went down to the basement to make the time machine. I had all the materials that I had gathered during the day; wires, old tin cans, a few broken clocks, and everything else I thought I'd need. Now it came to the hard part. I believed a time machine could be made, but the question was "how?"

First I decided to make a frame. I took some big old pieces of metal (rusty) and with the help of some of the heavy things that were down in the basement bent them into the shape of a tall sled with a back. Then I added the back of an old overstuffed chair, on the back of what was going to be the time machine, to lean back on when I was on my trip. Then in front of where my legs would be I added some solid pieces of metal. The top one had what could be used as a steering rod. Then I added the handlebars of an old bicycle. I put an old clock in front of the bottom of the handlebars.

It would be ready for tomorrow. The reason I say tomorrow was because supper would be done before I had gone half-way to yesterday and my mom would be suspicious if she had to call me up for dinner and I didn't come.

The next day I woke up early and went down to the basement. There, as I knew, lay what I hoped was a time machine. I climbed in and set the hands on the clock (the glass had been taken out long ago for some other purpose) to 2 minutes. In that way I hoped it would work so that it would mean two days.

I pushed down on the handlebars and leaned back on the seat and hoped. Suddenly there was a whizzing around me and I leaned back even more. The whizzing stopped. I was in front of my house. I got out of the time machine and walked in the door.

My mom was coming down the stairs as if she had just wakened up. Then I realized she had.

"Hi," I said. She didn't answer. "Yo, Mom," I said. She didn't even look at me. After trying every way I knew of saying Hello, I realized she couldn't see me. I walked up the stairs and into my room just to see me lying in bed asleep. The clock read the exact time it had when I had left for the day after tomorrow. This was fun.

I stayed around until the other me went outside to play at our apple tree in the front yard. I climbed with him (using the exact same route he did only a heart beat later). I climbed back down with him also, this time a heart beat before him.

I got back in my time machine and set the clock for 0 hours and 20 minutes. I was hoping this would bring me back exactly two days.

I leaned back and hoped. There was the whizzing again. It stopped and I was back in the basement. I tiptoed upstairs, slumped myself in my bed, slowly got myself out again, yawned a loud yawn, stayed in my room for a few minutes as if I was getting myself dressed, and went downstairs.

I lazed around on the couch a little while looking at the patterns on it—every cushion is different. My mom came downstairs and made breakfast. I ate it gladly. It was my favorite: porridge with lots of strawberries. I went outside to play. I played around for a little while and then decided to climb the apple tree a few times (every day went like this).

The next day I got up, got myself dressed and went downstairs. There my mom was making breakfast. After breakfast I went outside and climbed my apple tree, knowing that I was right under me. Then I climbed down still knowing that I was right under me. I couldn't see me or feel me, but I knew I was there because day before yesterday I had traveled to today. It was kind of like a radar. I knew everything I was going to do, but I *had* to do it.

That night before supper I went down to the basement to my time machine. I leaned back, set the clock for 1 minute and leaned back further and hoped. Like always there was the whizzing. Then suddenly I was under the dining room table. Mom was getting ready to make supper. I got out from under the table. This was the test to see if I could communicate with people in the future. I poked mom.

"Hey, mom," I said. To my amazement she said "Yeah," thinking I was the current me, although really I was I don't know where. "Can I go outside?" I said.

"No," she said, "it's almost dinner time. Go to your room and clean up."

This was a problem. I supposed I should just clean it up and amaze myself of tomorrow. I went up to my room and cleaned up. Suddenly the other me walked in. Luckily he couldn't see me, I suppose this is because I hadn't touched him yet. I put my hand on his shoulder and said, "Hi".

He stared at me in disbelief and said, "What ... the ... heck??"

"Hey don't get stiff, " I said, "I was just using the time machine. It's probably in the basement , but it's also under the dining room table."

"I don't get it," he said,"

"OK, I was going in the time machine yesterday. I set the clock for tomorrow. Then I sent myself to right now. I poked mom just to see if she could see me, and as soon as I touched her she could see me."

"What the..." he said.

"Listen, I just cleaned up your room—my room—and I think you should thank me for it."

"Thanks." He said. "Now could you please go to yesterday? Mom just sent me up here to clean up my room...again."

I climbed under the dining room table and brought myself back to my own time. The next day, just as I expected, I met the other me in my room. Of course, I was scared even though I expected it. You know one thing? When you're traveling in time it can sure get very complicated. For one thing, I had only seen myself right way around in photographs. Otherwise I just saw myself in the mirror and then I saw a backwards image.

Chapter 2
Kentick

The next few days went on like this, then I wondered if I could go up in time and then back to my time then why couldn't I go back into the past? I went to the time machine and set the clock so that I would go back 999,999 years. I hoped this would work and that before I was born I wouldn't just disappear and wait until I was born again (and have a twin).

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There was the whizzing and suddenly I was on this weird planet only as big as our house with craters all over it. I got out of the time machine and walked to the other side of the planet. This, I thought, is probably what the earth was before the earth. I noticed that I could breathe and was glad that there was air. Suddenly I heard some noises. I walked just to the place that I couldn't see from any other place I had been on the planet and there it was—an alien city.

Now when I say city, I don't mean like New York City. All I mean is it was busy and had a million houses and, when I say houses I don't mean the kind of house you live in or the kind a kid in New York City lives in, if you don't live in New York City. I mean there were kind of these egg things rolling around on the ground. Each one was just about the size of a room. Now, all of these egg things that were rolling around had labels on them. A couple of them passed me that said "kitchen". One of them passed me that said "Ixcklar's Room", one of them said "living room" and so on. Then it happened. One of the egg shaped things bonked into me. Not that it hurt or anything, I went right through it. Now before it bonked me, I happened to see that it said "Kentick's Room". Inside there was the exact furniture you would have in your room, except it was all floating around in the air. As soon as I stepped in one of the chairs swept past me and I was on top of it, meaning I was sitting in it, but I'm getting ahead of myself. In the room I saw a boy, he looked just about the same as you or me (that is if you are a boy) except he had bright green skin and his clothes looked like they were made out of paint. He looked almost as startled as I felt but he kept pretty calm, compared to how I felt.

"Uhhhh, hello?" he said.

"Uhhhh, hello," I said.

"Uhhhh, I'm Kentick," he said.

"Uhhhh, I'm John," I said.

"Why do you look so weird?" he questioned.

Then I remembered that not only did he look odd to me, but I looked odd to him.

"Uhhh, can I ask a question first?" I asked.

"Shoot."

"All right, here goes. What year is it?"

" 5300 after Flank".

"Who's Flank?"

"Everyone knows who Flank is," he said in a matter of fact voice. "I'll tell you the story."

Chapter 3
Flank

"Well," he started. Flank was born in a cog labin ... "

"What's a cog labin?" I had to ask.

"Well," he replied, "A labin is what we're in right now."

"You mean a dwelling?"

"Yeah, that's right. And cog is a color. Well, a material. Like what color did this labin look like when you first came in?"

"Brown."

"Right, except it wasn't, it was cog. So anyway, Flank was born in a cog labin in the middle of the woods in the D'laskan Aesert."

"What kind of woods was it", I asked.

"Actually, it wasn't really a woods," he replied, "I just described it that way so you would understand it. It was a wine poods."

It was right about then that I noticed that a lot of things he said were backwards. For instance: A "cog Labin" is what Abraham Lincoln was born in, a log cabin. And the D'laskan Aesert is the Alaskan Desert. And, a "wine poods" is a Pine woods. Now that takes a lot of thinking over. So I decided to cool it even though we hadn't even started talking about who Flank actually was. So I said to Kentick, "Can I go home and think this over a bit?"

"Sure" he said, "I'll direct this labin to where I picked you up."

I hopped down from the chair onto the rug, which immediately went sailing into the sky, so I had to jump down to the actual floor itself and walked out. Meaning, walked out through the wall. There I was, standing right next to my time machine. I got in, set it to go back home and hoped. The whizzing which I had learned was usual came all around me and suddenly I was back home about three minutes before I left. (I noticed that I always came back just a bit earlier, probably because it takes a few minutes to go to and fro, if you know what I mean.)

I went upstairs and tucked myself to bed. My mom thought I had gone to sleep hours ago. Well, for me hours ago. Now that I think on it, I wasn't supposed to go to sleep for another 3 minutes. But anyway, the next day I woke up early and went to Kentick's time. I stood there until I saw Kentick's room coming around, then stepped in.

"Hi, Kentick" I said.

"Hi," he said. "Hey I have a friend over, you might want to meet him. His name is Findem."

"Hi, Findem," I said.

"Hi," he said.

"Hey, Findem," said Kentick, "I'm in the middle of telling John ... "

"How do you know my name?" I interrupted

"I just do," he replied. "... I was just telling John," he repeated, "about Flank."

"Cool!" he said, "Where are you?"

" We just said about how Flank was born in a Cog Labin in the middle of the D'laskan Aesert in the middle of a Wine Poods."

• • • •

It turned out Findem was the best story teller on elanet parth (planet earth) and this is my version of his story: When Flank was nrob (born backwards) the first thing his father said when he saw him was "What an ugly baby boy." Well, for Flank things went down from there and when he was a teenager he aan rway from home.

So Flank stole a space ship and flew (Findem said that in his time they spelt it flu) to mlanet pars and landed. Soon a person walked by and Flank asked "How do you do?" and the person answered "Iay on'tday nderstanduay ouyay. "Oh," said Flank and walked away. Now Flank understood he would have to learn this language if he was going to live there so he walked till he saw another being.

Flank was a pretty smart guy so when someone said to him "Oodgay ayday s'ntiay itay." he wrote it down on a piece pf oaper. After a while Flank realized the first letter was put at the end then you added ay.

• • • •

After ten years of living on mlanet pars Flank got arrested for being a elanet parthian along with 20 other elanet parthians, which was half of the population. He got himself and 15 of those people out of jail. After that Flank started doing things for elanet parth left and right and that is why it is 5300 after ***Flank***. But wait, don't go, there's more! Flank didn't die!! He disappeared one day and nobody has found him!!!

Chapter 4
Mlanet pars

When Findem was done telling his story, me and Kentik and I applauded.

"If Findem disappeared, why hasn't anybody looked for him?" I asked.

"Well......." Kentik replied, "that's one weakness with our brains. Once it has been about 100 years we only think of something as a story."

"You mean no one has looked for him?"

"Well...."

"You mean, if you looked you might be able to find him!?"

"It's not our fault......"

"If 5300 years ago you had spaceships, you must be very advanced, so we could fly there in about a second!"

"My father does have a spaceship,"he replied.

"What are we waiting for, then? Let's go!"

"I guess so!" he answered a little more convinced, "Let's go!

The spaceships—they had must have been enormous—I don't know, because Kentick's father had a space raft, which meant it was the size of five football fields and only went at the speed of sound, not light.

• • • •

To be continued in our next kids' issue (the spring one in 1996). I don't know about the rest of you, but I can hardly wait! Oh, Flank, where are you? Does anyone else have any ideas about where he might be?

And Ian has sent us a review:

JACOB'S RESCUE

by Malka Drucker and Michael Halperin
reviewed by Ian Leue

This book is about the Holocaust. The Holocaust was a time from the late 1930's to mid 1940's, during World War II. Millions and millions of Jews were killed. They were killed because of the Nazis. The Nazis where a group of people who killed anybody who did not have blue eyes, blond hair and were tall. If somebody hid a Jew or another person not in the description above and the Nazis discovered them, the people and their hiders would be killed.

This story is about Jacob, his brother David, and their rescuers; Alex, and his wife Mela. Jacob was a Jew, and 8 years of age when he first went into hiding. Jacob also had a brother named Sholom who died shortly after coming into hiding with Jacob. David was the middle brother. Jacob and both his brothers hid with Alex and Mela Roslan, who were not Jews. They hid Jacob, David, and for a short time Sholom, out of kindness.

Jacob was a Polish Jew who escaped from the Warsaw Ghetto. The Ghetto was a place where Jews were forced to go to and where they got little food to eat. He escaped with his Aunt Hannah. She had arranged with the man that used to be their chauffeur to have some friends take care of Jacob. These friends were Alex and Mela. When Jacob first came to their house in the city, he would hide under their sink in a little trap door Alex made, when anyone except the family (Alex and Mela had two children) were around. Even when no one else was around, he was not allowed to go outside because he had curly black hair and brown eyes. Then they were able to buy a large apartment to make it easier. After this, Sholom moved in. Then Jacob hid in the bathroom closet. Sholom soon died of scarlet fever. After that they were forced to sell their large apartment and buy a one-room apartment, because they needed money to treat Jacob's scarlet fever. Then the last brother, David, moved in. One night the neighbor's house was bombed, so they moved to the country where Mela's brother lived.

Though many died, Jacob and David survived the war and are alive today, as are Alex and Mela. After the war Jacob and David heard from the Jewish Agency that their father had survived the concentration camps and was living in Israel and wanted them to move to him. Alex and Mela wanted to go too, but since they were not Jewish, the British would not allow them to go.

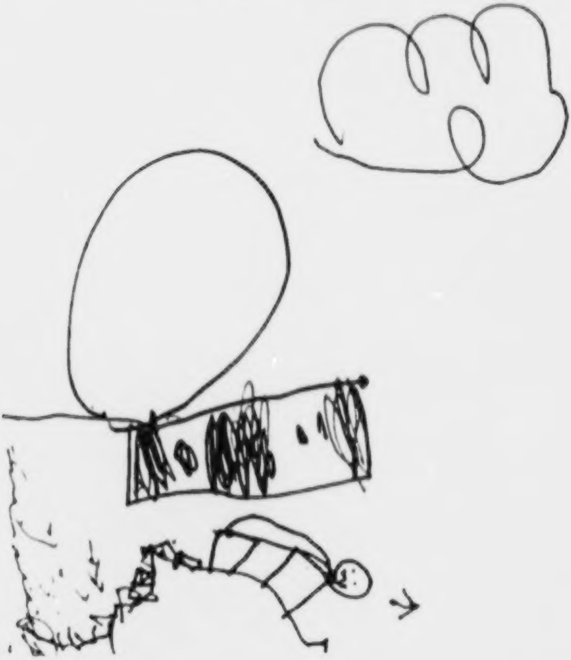
I think it is a wonderful book, but not something that one should start off learning about the Holocaust with, because it is very intense. The Holocaust was a terrible time and I think people should never forget it.

Till Juan Boadella is a friend of one of the editors who lives with his parents in a tiny village high in the Swiss Alps overlooking a very large lake which is called the Bodensee, or the Boden sea—because it is a kind of inland sea. From Till's house, you can see three countries: Switzerland, of course, Germany and France—and also another range of snow-covered Alpine peaks. This is a very magical place to live, and Till is a very magical boy, so of course his stories are all magical. Here is one of them, with Till's illustrations.

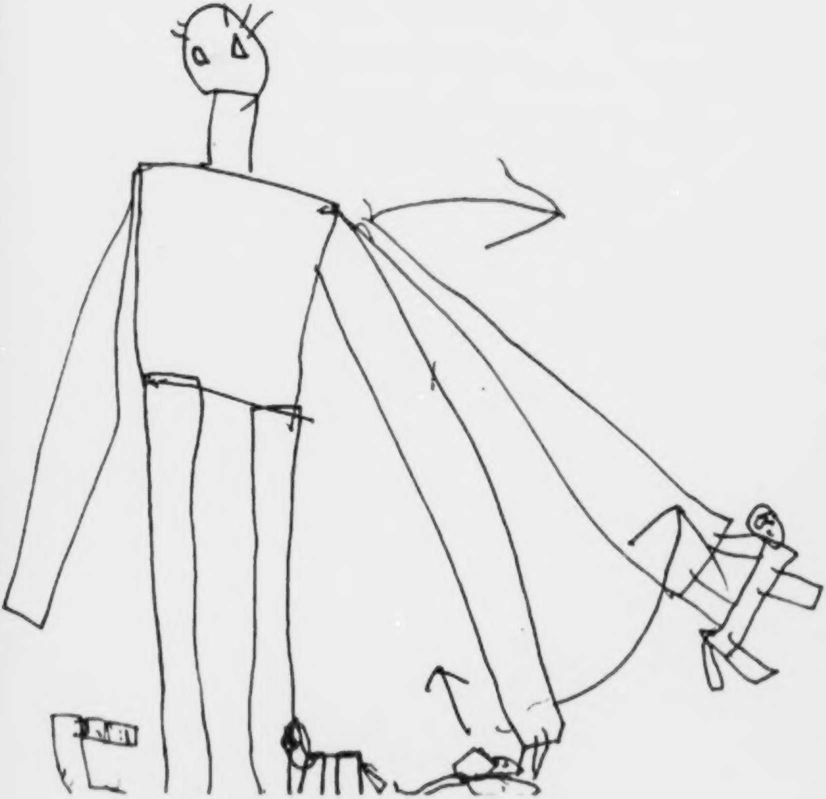
THE BEAR AND THE ANXIOUS MEN

by Till Juan Boadella

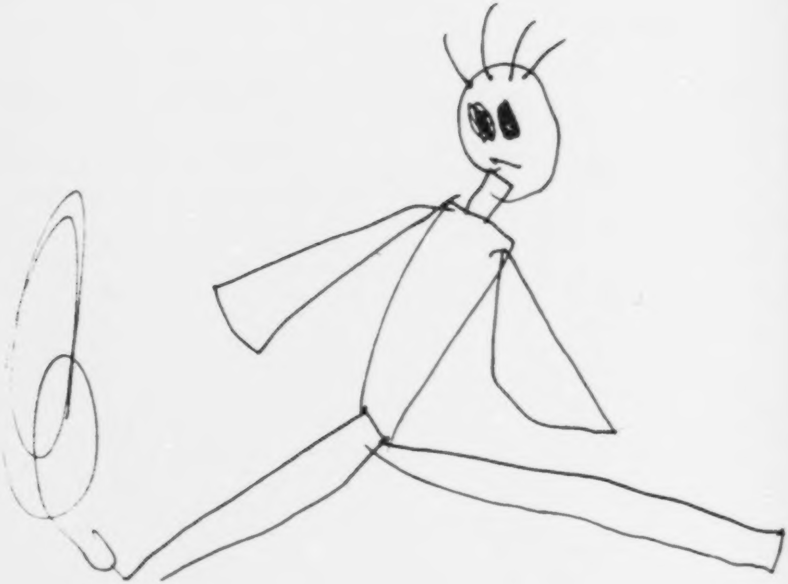
The bear comes out of the mouth of the mountain stamping and growling.



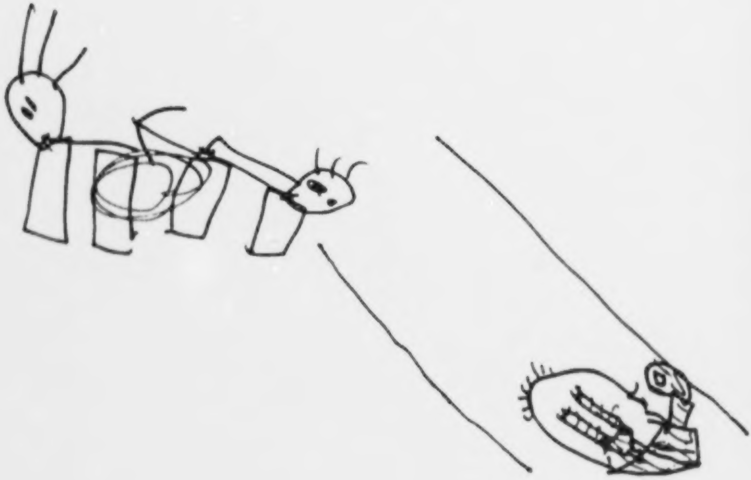
When he is tired of walking and wandering around the hills and walking over the rocks he goes to sleep, and when he is snoring two giants come and hear his loud noise, and think it is another giant. They throw him around to try to make him dead. He opens one eye, blinking; he bites one giant on the foot, and the other giant on the other foot.



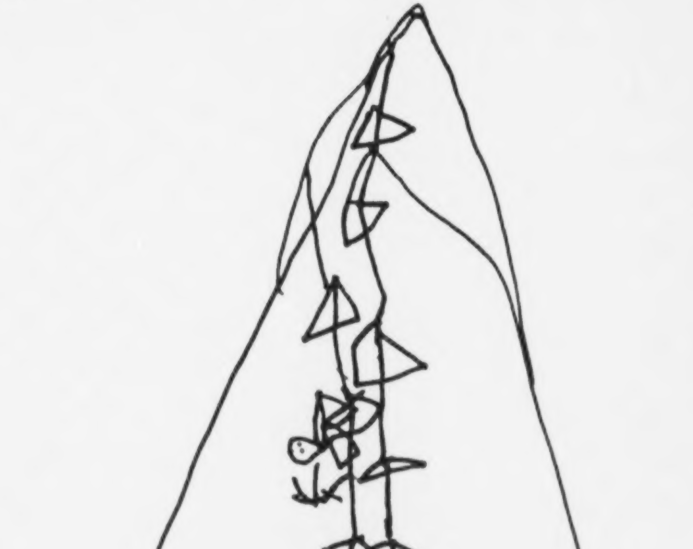
They run over the hills and quick away to the mouth of their cave. The bear wanders again around over the rocks and stones.



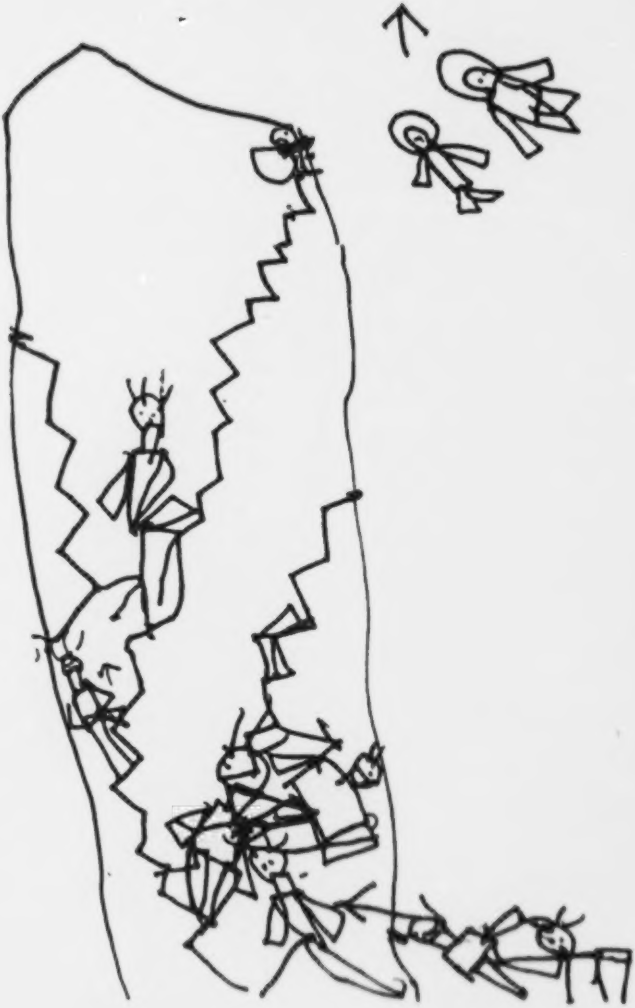
He finds a cave with two normal red and white stripey tigers protecting a baby tiger. The bear raced away so quick, stony things flew from his feet, and he looked very frightened.



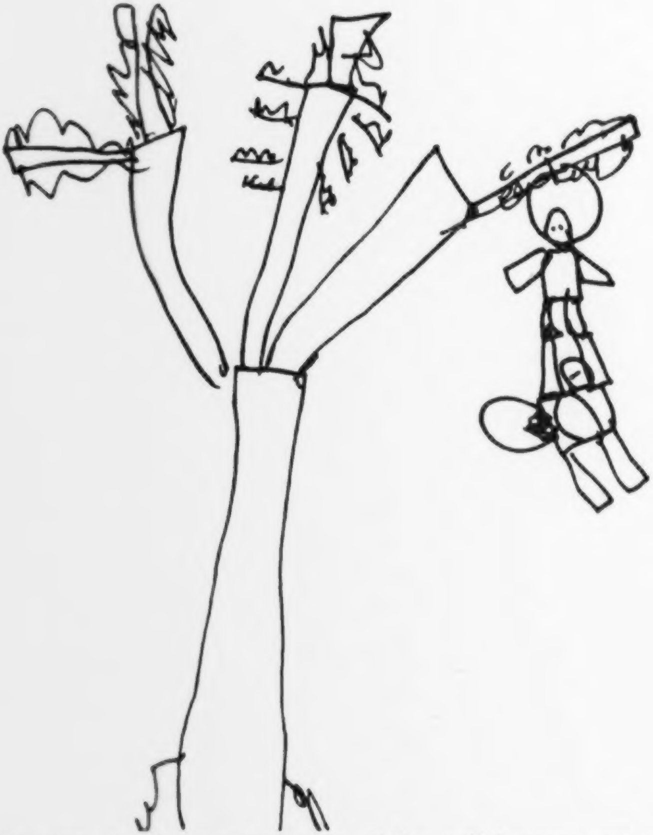
He walked steep down the very high hills of the Himalayas. A hunter with a long rifle was kneeling at the bottom of the mountain, waiting behind a rock as high as a table.



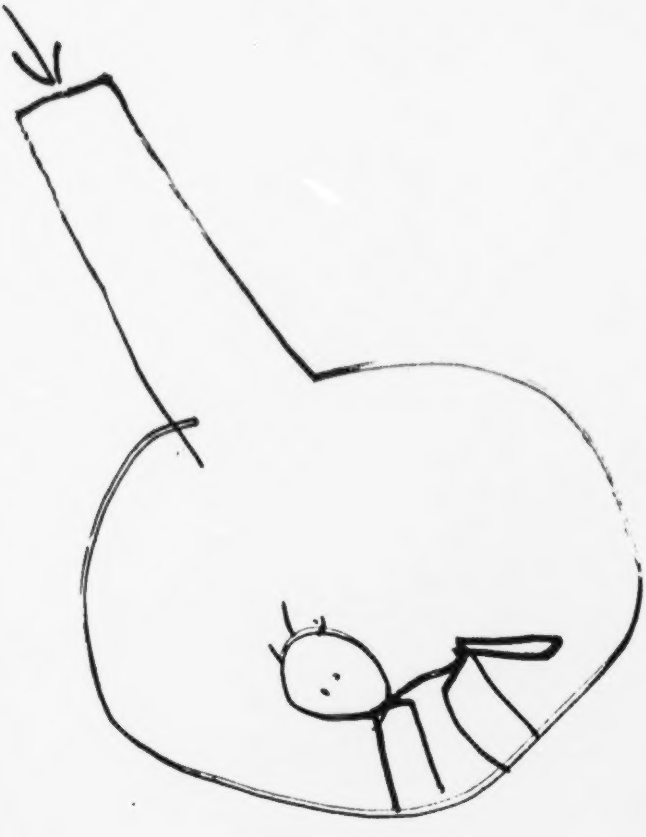
The bear came on and suddenly he saw a piece of iron with two round holes in it, and inside the holes he saw little pointed things like arrows. He jumped out of the way just in time.



Two bullets made a loud explosion and they were flying straight and never stopping until they suddenly hit into a rock. The hunter had no more bullets. The bear turned and chased the hunter. He ran away as fast as he could. He opened the door of a strange house that was not his, and a man coming down the stairs said: "Hey, get out of here, it's not your house." "A bear is waiting outside," said the hunter with a very anxious voice. The man who was in charge of the house fell down the stairs and hurt his back because he was frightened.



They went to the upper room of the tall house, put two parachutes on their backs and jumped out of the window, The wind pushed them and they landed in a tree.



The bear went away because they were never coming out, and came again to his own land.

Till Juan Boadella is 6 years old.

POEMS:

Four by Ted Becker

STONE

A stone is what holds life to gether
What life springs up in the Spring
What holds our earth in its hands
What renews life
What holds all life that we devour
with hunger
Stone makes all mountains
and life

FUN

fun laughing happy go jolly
come and eat lunch come on
let's eat brunch jokes
fun folks think drink
beer no let me steer
yes yes come on try
to guess

TWO HUMBUGS

two humbugs *definitely*
dumbugs oh, I'm dead
c'mon pop me in the
head oh no he turned
red not fair I
have to pop every
where now this
time grab
my hair come
oh pop me every
where

BED

go to bed
no, my bed is not red
I said go to bed no
and I fled I ran
behind a chair
my Mom came
on get out of there
she grabbed me I said
no no
I ask of only one
thing please turn my
bed red

Two by Hannah Mossop

HAMSTERS

Hairy furry fat
And greedy
Mommy said she's
Small and soft
Tiny and naughty
Even Daddy thinks
she's cute
Running round all
the time
Sleepy sometimes, too

WINTER

In the winter
When I go out to play
I like to soar a million
miles away
Across the hills over
the ocean
Right down to Borneo

One by Nicole Korzyk

BANANA CHOCOLATE

One day
I opened a banana
chocolate swirls
it had pictures of
squirrels
I was surprised
I couldn't believe my
eyes
I ate it

What follows is an account by several kids from The Free School in Albany, New York, of a trip they raised money for and took, with two teachers, to help rebuild a peasant village that had been through many trials and setbacks, both climatic and political. Chris' journal, a more detailed account of some aspects of the trip, appears later in this issue.

PUERTO RICO JOURNAL

Lily:

6/14/95

The flight was a lot of fun but the movie was so bad. When San Juan finally could be seen through the clouds, it was beautiful. After we landed, we went and got our bags; then when Ruel got there, we got in his van. On the way up to our house we saw some cool trees like this big fan palm and so many fruit trees. Yesterday we got to this swimming hole/waterfall/stream. It was a lot of fun. I think today was the best. I had a lot of fun with Eve down in the rainforest making a path from the kitchen to a little stream. It was so magnificent, all these new trees and sounds.

6/16/95

Yesterday was a lot of fun. We all went down to a bunch of land rescuers to see what we could do, but we didn't find anything to do just then. So we went to have lunch at a house that Ruel had worked on before. The view of the mountains from the house was so beautiful. Today, I did some more work for Ruel with everyone else. Then we had a magnificent chili dinner that Chris cooked. I just can't wait to see what tomorrow will bring in the village we are going to work in, and maybe, just maybe, we will get up early enough to get donuts from the donut truck. After all Chris did say he will pay if one of us goes for them.

6/17/95

Today we went to a village and helped a man named Julio build a septic tank and with the footings for his new house. Wow, it was hot; it must have been 99 today. I was working with Ted and Zach sifting sand to make mortar for Chris and Juan to use for the tank. Then as we were riding home Ruel told us to look for chicken, which Mike found. So, we had a delicious meal. After dinner all of us went to the basketball court and played basketball and hung out.

6/18/95

Today we worked all day at Julio's, taking the water out of his half-done septic tank. On breaks, I would go play with his little daughter, Puchu, and try to keep her from strangling her kitten or her puppy. It's been neat with her because she knows no English and I only know a teensy bit of Spanish. Still sometimes she'll turn to me and point to something and start speaking Spanish and I'll just have to nod my head and pretend I know what she's talking about. When we finally finished getting the water out, it was pretty cool because tomorrow we can probably finish the tank. Then, Julio's wife Manuela brought us a meal of French fries and eggs. After that I played with Puchu in the holes for the foundation of Julio's new house. I can't wait to go back.

6/19/95

Today we got up at 7:45 and waited for the donut truck, but it never came. On the way to Julio's house we decided to buy the cement, sand and rocks to finish the septic tank. Then, after Gabby, Lisha, Eve and I did Puchu's hair, we loaded into the van with Manuela and Stephanie, a graduate student who had come to help Ruel for the rest of the summer, to go to the store to get food for Manuela to cook for supper, which I was really looking forward to. When we got back, we all got to ride the family's horse. She was beautiful. Thump, thump went the horse and bump, bump went me. It was the most fun when their oldest son, Jose, ran with the horse. The food was ready when we were done. It was delicious—French fries and fried chicken, with a tossed salad. Ummm, she is a good cook. Then Jose invited us to walk over to the waterfall and swimming hole near their house. We were all pretty glad because damn, we were dirty. It had some pretty cool waterfalls and I got some good photos, but other than that, it smelled pretty bad.

6/20/95

Today I woke up to hear the donut man's voice fading away down the hill. When I finally got up, we had to clean the house before we could go in to San Juan for a day of tourism. After we all piled into Ruel's van and made it down the mountains to San Juan, we first went to a fort called El Morro. It was pretty neat. I got the souvenirs I wanted for my Mom and Sarah and then we looked around some. They had these really cool staircases like a spiral staircase and a triangular staircase that was so steep that they had to warn people. Me, Gabby, Eve and Lisha just went around the fort exploring old dungeon rooms and gunnery towers. Then we went to the Plaza des Armas to meet Ruel. On the way over, we stopped at a frozen dessert cart and I got a Piña Colada. It was the best I'd ever had. When we got to the Plaza, I think I had the most fun I'd had all day. There was a boy who had some beans he was feeding to some pigeons. They were so tame they would fly to his hands and perch on them to eat. He asked me if I wanted some, and at first I was afraid the pigeons would bite me. But then, one did land on my hand and it was pretty cool. Then everyone else was doing it and sometimes two birds would land on me. Tonight we had a delicious taco dinner made by Zach and Mike. I'm so sorry we have to go home Thursday. I can't wait to go back to work tomorrow.

6/21/95

Today was our last day in Puerto Rico. Tomorrow we leave for home. This morning, we all got up late and went to Julio's. Gabby, Lisha, Eve and I made supper with Manuela, which was fruit salad, tossed salad, home fries, fried plantain and pork chops. After dinner I went and helped mix and shovel cement onto the roof of the septic tank. Finally, Ruel told us we didn't need any more cement and I watched Ruel, Isaiah and Mike put on the finishing touches. Hooray, it was done! But then, we had to say good-bye and head home. On the way home we got some party fixings and stopped at our waterfall one last time. At home we had a small surprise birthday party for Manuel, one of the boys in the village, and a going-away party for the rest of us. After that, we all went down to the basketball court with Manuel, Miguel, Alexi, Juan David and Wilfredo to play one last game of basketball like we had all week. Then after hanging out back at the house in the loft with Gabby, Alexi and Manuel, we had to say good-bye. I hope I can come back some day.

Zach:
6/16/95

I was surprised when I got to Puerto Rico. I thought it would look like a desert, but everything looked so green. I'd never seen a palm tree before. Now I've been here five days. It's been o.k. Today I cut a lot of wood to make three beds.

6/19/95

Today we went to a new waterfall. I cut rebar at Villa Estancias del Sol and I took a lot of pictures. I had fried chicken, French fries and salad for dinner. We went there yesterday and the day before. It's been really hot this whole time. We have been working at Villa Estancias del Sol building a septic system for the people who live there. I have tasted a lot of fruit like some green, grape-sized fruit where you take off the shell, eat the inside and spit out the seed. Another fruit is called a mango. It's yellow and you peel the skin and it's very sweet and good. There are a lot of fruit trees here, orange trees, grapefruit trees, and banana trees, and I like all of them.

They have a basketball court down the road. We play every night. Today I got to ride a horse. Everybody who wanted to got a turn, but only me and Ted rode long rides with Jose who was the person who took us on the rides. I rode up the hill and went to some person's house and then we went back down the hill. Then we went back to the place we were working at and cut some more rebar for the septic system and then we went to the waterfall. That was not the same waterfall we went to the other days. This one is the one closer to the place where we were working.

6/20/95

Today I woke up and heard everybody talking about the donut man. When I went outside, I cooked some eggs. We had to clean up the place we stayed at before we went to San Juan. We spent an hour drive to get to San Juan and when we got there, we went to a fort that was called El Morro. When I got there I looked over a small wall and saw the ocean. Then we went inside and looked in some of the rooms. One of the rooms was an old storage room with cannon balls, gun powder, and missiles. It had everything. And then I went to the gift shop and got a lot of postcards and I got some pictures. Then I went to a store where I got Nicole [Zach's little sister] a necklace. After that, I got a snow cone without the sugar part but he made me pay a dollar. Then I went to a store where I got sugarless gum and some sugar-free mints. I went outside and saw a lot of pigeons. A boy was feeding them and one flew up and landed on my hand and started eating bird seed out of it. I caught one with my hand and held its wings down and then I threw it up and it flew away. When we came back they dropped me, Mike, Missy, Ted, Joe and Chris off at the community center and the rest of them went to the river. Everybody that didn't go to the river didn't want to go to the river except for me and Mike because we had to cook. We cooked tacos and everybody said it was the best meal we have had yet on this trip.

6/21/95

Today I got up at 8:15 and had eggs for breakfast. We left for Villa Estancias del Sol at about 9:00 and we got there at about 10:00. When we got there we had to start mixing cement. The amounts we put in were five buckets of sand, five buckets of gravel, and one bag of cement. We put wood in the septic tank put metal things on the wood and put cement on the metal. Then we went to the waterfall and climbed up rocks and jumped off them.

Elisha:

We left at 6:00 a.m. June 12, 1995. Then we had to drive about four hours to get to the airport in New York City. The plane ride was a little over three hours. It was a pretty cool plane ride, though. When we got to Puerto Rico, Ruel was waiting for us outside. It was so hot when I stepped outside that I could hardly breathe. Then we went shopping for food and had the best dinner in the whole world—P.B and J's.

The next morning we all took really cold showers. Then we moved some two-by-fours, which was really easy; and then we moved a whole lot of gravel down to the kitchen. We spent the next couple of days working on Ruel's house, building a lot of shelves and beds for the summer program Ruel was going to have. Then, we went to a few of the land rescues around the area. Land rescues are land for people whose houses got wrecked in the many hurricanes. We ate lunch at one of these houses that Ruel is building for a friend. Ruel and Chris met Julio, whose septic system we're going to build.

The next day we had donuts for breakfast and that was pretty cool. Then, later that day we went to the beach which I didn't like because the water was so salty. The only things I liked about the beach were that the water was warm and that's where we got our spending money. Then, the day after that, we started on Julio's septic system. I was looking forward to it because it was our first real hard working project. Julio had already started it so we just had to help him finish it. On the first day we had to get down in the tank and scoop out the water which was all dirty and muddy from the rain and from just sitting there so long. So it was really nasty getting down in there and getting all wet and smelly from the water. Then, we started making cement for the walls inside the tank. We also cut a lot of re-bar for the top of the septic tank. Then, the next couple of days, Gaby, Lily, Eve and I worked in the kitchen with Julio's wife making the biggest lunches I have ever eaten in my whole life. She is one of the best cooks I have ever seen. When we were done I felt really proud and I think we all did. Even though we didn't build a house or anything, we still made a difference in one family's life and that's what really counts. Julio is building a second house which we helped with the footings for. But he has nine children and six of them are living somewhere else until he finishes his second house; so he, his wife and three kids live in a house the size of my living room.

The next day we went to San Juan and did a little shopping. We ended up at the town square and there must have been at least 50 to 100 pigeons there, and if you had some food in your hands they would come and land right on your hands or head. And every single night we were down at the basketball court either watching the guys play or we were playing basketball with them. Some nights we would just hang out with the guys from our school, and Manuel and Miguel were the two guys we met down there. They were really nice. Today we did a lot of cleaning and packing to go home. I will miss Puerto Rico a lot but I am really happy to be going home.

When we got back to New York City, Nicole and Kathy were there to pick us up and the ride home seemed a lot shorter then the ride down to N.Y.C. Maybe it was because everyone slept the whole way home.

Ted:

Every year at the Free School, the oldest class goes on a trip. This year we went to Puerto Rico. We had to raise $5000 for air fare, food, building supplies and spending money. One of the things we did to raise the money was to have a raffle. We called local stores and businesses and asked for prizes and we got forty. Then, we went to stores and door-to-door selling raffle tickets for a dollar each. We made $2,000 on the raffle. We also wrote letters to relatives, friends and local businesses to sponsor us, and that raised $1,500. And then we had a French dinner and about seven bake sales to raise another $1,500.

We were going to Puerto Rico to help build houses for the poor and homeless with an organization called Building Community. Our host was Ruel Bernard. We lived in a wooden house with no running water. We made shelves and poured gravel for the walkways every day. Then, we went to the waterfall after we finished working, and when we went home, we made dinner.

What I liked most about Puerto Rico was the kids. I met most of the kids at the basketball park, and they were very friendly. We played basketball every night, usually with Manuel, Wilfredo, Alexi and Juan David after we got back from working. On the last day, when we were finishing up on a septic tank, I went with the younger son of the house to get ice and eggs for dinner, and on the way there he invited me to come with him to school the next morning because he was going to fight someone. He was very proud of it, and he told me that they fight every day in school. School started at 7:00 and ended at 5:00, which is much too long, I think, because then kids don't get to do what they want to.

On the last day, we went to San Juan to see the old fort, El Morro, and we walked around town. By the end of the trip, everyone was glad they came. I especially liked meeting Manuel and Alexi because we talked a lot and they were very funny.

Note: The journal that follows is not a part of the Puerto Rico journal even though Gaby Becker was a participant in the latter. Aren't these kids something? Gives one hope for the future.

Kentucky Journal
by Gabrielle Becker

Corbin, Kentucky

In my church class at Westminster Presbyterian, we looked up work camps one day and decided that we wanted to go. We had a lot of money donated from our church and we also did fund-raising. We had a pancake dinner, a book sale, a plant sale and a spaghetti dinner . We even collected change and by the time we were done fundraising, we had just enough to make it. Other churches from all around the United States were doing the same kinds of things—fundraising, asking for donations, and things like that. Then they were hopping in their vans and if they didn't have one, they'd rent one like we did and go driving down to Kentucky. We also had to rent a U-Haul to carry our stuff and Broadalbin's [another community] stuff. The first night, we stopped at a hotel. By the second afternoon, we were in a big brigade of vans and minivans. We had about twelve vehicles in our minivan parade. We stopped at a hotel again for the night, and by the third afternoon of driving, we were there at the Junior Senior High School in Corbin, Kentucky.

When we were there, everyone divided up into groups of six or seven people. No two people from the same church group were together. I was in group number 18. We worked on the home of Claire Roundtree. Her husband had died two days before we arrived. She appreciated our company. Her sister and a friend came over to see how she was doing. She is quiet and friendly. She is very smart, too. Claire is near seventy and her house needed more fixing up than she could do. The roof of her trailer leaked in many places. Claire's lock was broken. She had cinder blocks for the front steps. Her bathroom was filled with grime and brown residue from the water. She really needed our help. The members of our group were Tom, who was the leader, Lacey, Jeremy, Stacy, me, Alyssia, and Mark, who left the second day we started because of his uncle's death. We came to her home in the morning and I thought when I saw it, "How are we ever going to repair this?" But we did, we did even more than necessary. The office gave the directions and supplies and we had a week to finish it all.

The first day, Monday, we swept all the dirt off of her roof. Leaves had fallen from a tree overhead and had decomposed into dirt; plants grew on her roof and ants made homes. We swept it all away. Tuesday we dug post holes, sealed up small cracks in her roof with tar, and replaced the lock. That same day Stacey and I cleaned her bathroom and scrubbed green slime from the front of her house. Then Wednesday, we built the porch and painted. Thursday we put silver roofing tar on her roof. We made steps and painted the outside of her house. Friday we did drywalling in the living room and hallway. We also painted the last bit of the house.

I know the residue will come back in the bathroom and the ants will probably return on the roof along with the leaves, but it is really a lot better than when we started and Claire appreciates it.

There are puppies that live across from her house. They don't get fed very much and I know that one of them gets hit. We named the white and black one Rex and the brown and black one Romeo. We also brought extra sandwiches from our lunch and fed it to the dogs and by the end of the week, they knew us really well and would jump up on us and come in the van.

The last day we were at Claire's house we found a tick the size of a small June bug in Rex's ear. He also had three more smaller ones in the same ear. Romeo had three smaller ones too. We took them out with pliers. It was painful for the dogs and I hope that they don't get sick. There was also a litter of kittens living under Claire's house, about five of them all together, but only the calico one came out. We named her Juliet. We would feed her, too.

Every morning we got up around 6:15 a.m. to a loud and annoying song, got dressed and went down to eat breakfast and packed a lunch for the day. After doing this we would go and meet our crew in the gym. We would read a part of the Bible in a booklet that everyone had and when this was over, I would go get the cooler I was using and supply the snacks and the ice for the site. I was called the "break maker," one of the easier jobs. Then we drove to our site and worked until around 3:30 and returned to the school we stayed at. Everyone had free time until dinner; then we had the evening program where we sang and met up with our work groups again. At about 9:30 we would have free time until 10:00 and then everyone would get together with their church group. We would talk about the day and our sites and friends we had made and things like that.

I really had a lot of fun there because there were so many kids my age and they were all interested in helping the people at their sites so everybody was really in a good mood most of the time. I made a lot of new friends and got to know my old ones better. There was a feeling kind of like family, a feeling that you could go up to anybody you chose to and start a conversation or ask a question or just anything and they would be friendly and willing to talk. There was also something called "care cards." Everyone had a little envelope with their name on it and there were pencils and pieces of paper sitting around. You could write little notes of encouragement or anything you really wanted to write to someone on the paper and then you would slip it into the envelope the note was for. At the end of the week when everyone was going home, they would read them.

I had a great time and I definitely want to go next year.

KIDS' CORRESPONDENCE PAGES:

I got the names and addresses of these kids from various places in Africa from a really neat magazine called **Skipping Stones**. *Chris has reviewed it for us at the end of this issue. You can order a sub (5 issues) for $20, or a single issue for $5. They will also send you a set of four environmental games and puzzles for $5. Send them your name and address with a check (on a US bank, or an international money order) to Skipping Stones, PO Box 3939, Eugene, OR 97403-0939. Their phone number is (503) 342-4956. You can also order back issues. Each one focuses on a different country or some one topic of interest within these cultures. They also give prizes to kids for essays.*

In the next kids' issue I'll give you a lot more, most of them from Sweden. OK, here goes:

PEN PALS

PEN PALS

ZIMBABWE

Portia Rumbidzai Mbuva, girl
Mupangayi Secondary School,
Private Bag 911, Shurugwi
ZIMBABWE
Int: swimming, photos, stamps

Rhodah Mashavave, girl, 15
Chindunduma High, P Bag 2072
Shamva, ZIMBABWE
Int: baking, swimming, stamps

Sharon Pedzisai, girl, 13
5 Dawson Street,
Yeovil, Mutare ZIMBABWE
Int: swimming, singing, letters

Patuma Ndala, girl, 15
17 Princess Margaret Road
Marlborough, Harare, ZIMBABWE
Int: swimming, tennis, reading

Clive Musoya, boy, 12
Int: soccer, writing letters

Philip Mashiya, boy, 12
Int: soccer, baseball
3721 92nd Street, PO Highfield
Harare, ZIMBABWE

Oile Kapjumo, boy, 12
Int: soccer, video games

Blessing Paliza, boy, 15
Int: swimming, tennis
3711 92nd Street, PO Highfield
Harare, ZIMBABWE

Stanley Musabayeka, boy, 11
123 Mutamba Drive, PO Mufakose
Harare, ZIMBABWE
Int: reading and illustrating stories

Esnath Gombakomba, girl, 17
35 Nzou Avenue, PO Mufakose
Harare, ZIMBABWE
Int: reading, movies, music, church

Karim Samuels, boy, 11
3 Jacaranda Drive, Hatfield
Harare, ZIMBABWE
Int: swimming, music, tennis, soccer

Dumisari Dhliwayo, boy, 10
11 Agincourt Flats, Sixth Avenue
Parktown, Waterfalls, ZIMBABWE
Int: fishing, hunting, ballroom dance

Beautie Chingwaru, girl, 14
586 NR2, Murwira Street
Dangamvura, Mutare, ZIMBABWE
Int: swimming, novels, gospel music

Edward Mulambo, boy, 15
2617 Takunda Street, Mucheka
Masvingo, ZIMBABWE
Int: movies, reading, fishing, tennis

Paradzai Mutemi, boy, 15
2305 8th Crescent, Budiriro 1
PO Glen View
Harare, ZIMBABWE
Int: reading, music, cooking

George Masimba, boy, 17
House No. 1660, 1st
Road Glen View 1,
Harare, ZIMBABWE
Int: soccer, writing stories, English

Rodney Alex Makoto, boy, 13
POB 233, Mhangura, ZIMBABWE
Int: video games

Judith Masoka, girl, 17
Mkushi Stores, Box 1
Mpandawana, ZIMBABWE
Int: English novels, music, church

NAMIBIA

Thaimy S. Matthews, girl, 16
P.O. Box 7019, Katukura
Windhoek, NAMIBIA
Int: music, dance, friends, jokes

Christine Shifonono, girl, 16
Ella du Plessus High School
PO Box 10399, Khomasdal
Windhoek, NAMIBIA
Int: music, dance, reading

SOUTH AFRICA

Inshaaf Blanchard, 12
22 Wallflower Street, Lentegew
Mitchell's Plain 7785
SOUTH AFRICA
Int: soccer, netball, swimming, TV

Themba A. Sibanyoni, girl, 16
POB 78, Mbibane
0049 Vaalbank,SOUTH AFRICA
Int: music, dance, disco, magazines
Rachel S. Ngwenya, girl, 16
Private Bag x2008, Tihabane, 0305
Northwest Region, SOUTH AFRICA
Int: tennis, singing, USA, languages

GHANA

Victor K. Mensah, boy,
16 c/o Emmanuel Kusi, PO Box 419
Sunyani B/A, GHANA
Int: football, music

Francis Atta Fofie Jr., boy, 14
c/o Francis Fofie, POB 823
Suyani B/A, GHANA
Int: bible, gospel

Anim Y. Eric
Oduro Y. Nicholas ,
Northridge Road, Box 87
Sunyani B/A, GHANA
Int: reading, telling about culture

Agyei Francis, boy, 15
c/o Mr Charles Kwateng
Ministry of Health,
PO Box 31
Nkoranza B/A, GHANA

Evans Gyamfi, boy, 15
Roman Catholic Church,
POB 48, Nkoranza B/A, GHANA

Duah Stephen, boy, 16
c/o Miss Haggar Pokuaa
POB 47, Nkoranza B/A, GHANA
Int: sports, music, card games

Agyeiwaa Vivian, boy, 16
c/o Shopwell PO, Box 33
Nkoranza B/A, GHANA

Owusu Nyamekye, boy
St Theresa's Primary School
POB 30, Nkoranza B/A, GHANA

James Ampofo, boy, 16
S D A Church
Tom-Nkoranza B/A,
GHANA

Asante Kwaku, boy, 14
POB 32, Sunyani B/A,
GHANA
Int: letters, soccer

Kwame Kennedy, boy, 15
POB 823, Sunyani B/A, GHANA
Int: soccer, postcards

Thomas 0. Amoako, boy, 13
c/o G.B.C., PO Box 74
Sunyani B/A. CiHANA
Int: reading stories, running

Richard Agyei, boy, 14
POB 199, Sunyani B/A, GHANA
Int: music, football, swimming

Tawiah Nyarko, boy, 15
Nyamaa J.S.S., PO Box 299
Sunyani B/A, GHANA
Int: peace, South Africa

Bright A. Koranteng, boy, 15

Kwabena Michael, boy, 14
c/o Miss Margaret Adu
Ministry of Health, PO Box 31,
Nkoranza B/A, GHANA
Int: music, football, volleyball

Alex Konadu, boy, 13
Ridge Experimental J.S.S.
POB 128, Sunyani B/A, GHANA
Int: reading stories, running

Richard Atta Boateng, boy, 13
c/o Mr. L.K. Nsiah, S.C.C.
POB 327, Sunyani B/A, GHANA
Int: football, table tennis, reading

Isaac Amoako, boy, 10
Ridge Experimental Primary
POB 128, Sunyani B/A, GHANA
Int: table tennis, football

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THE BRIDGE

by Ted Strunck

Ted Strunck is a teacher at Upland Hills, in Royal Oaks, Michigan. If he sends us another article, as we hope he will, perhaps he will tells us more about himself, as Ted is obviously not your run-of-the-mill teacher! And maybe Upland Hills School isn't your run-of-the-mill school, either. What they have done together is truly miraculous!

> *It's a story of dreams and doing the impossible through cooperation and planning and steadfast determination. It's a story of having kids learn by doing real things, learning to use tools and working as part of a team, learning that accomplishing a great task requires making many mistakes and going on from there.*

The following article is about building a bridge. A class of 7th and 8th graders at Upland Hills School in rural Michigan, over a period of 2 school years. completed a 175' long span across a 20' deep gully behind their school. It's a story of dreams and doing the impossible through cooperation and planning and steadfast determination. It's a story of having kids learn by doing real things, learning to use tools and working as part of a team, learning that accomplishing a great task requires making many mistakes and going on from there.

Just yesterday, July 12, 1994, my group and I finished a 2 year long project—we finished our bridge! This is no namby-pamby bridge either; this one stretches 175' across a gully that runs between our school and our Ecological Awareness Center which we use for theatre, recording etc. It stands a good 20' off the ground at center and weighs approximately 28,7000 lbs. It was designed and built by 13 -15 year olds in the oldest group and it cost nothing. (We had to pay the local building inspectors about $150 for their building permits and inspections). But yes, that's right, we used all salvaged material.

When I was first asked to teach by the oldest group at our school, I felt they needed some kind of outdoor, physical enterprise to use up some of that incredible energy young adolescents have. I couldn't see myself sitting in a classroom for very long with all this roiling energy just beneath the surface, ready to explode.

Now just behind our school there's this gully we call "Toboggan Hill" because every winter we all sled down its very steep slopes. It's great. But also we all have to tread these same slopes in Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer, carrying armloads of costumes, papers, files, props and musical instruments, and it can get treacherous. The very first time I walked that gully I thought it would be a great place to build a bridge. After walking it 2-300 times, I felt rather strongly about it.

Anyway, I approached my director about the idea and much to his credit, he gave me the OK with only one stipulation—no money for the project. Well I've never been one to let that sort of thing stop me, so I set off thinking about what kind of materials were available for free that we could build a bridge with. Lo and behold! Right under my nose and all around me—utility poles! I called our local utility company and found out that yes, they have plenty of discarded poles we could have if we could haul them away. Okay! Step one. A source for possible materials.

That fall as the oldest group sat attentive and wide-eyed before me, I told them about the idea to build a bridge across "Toboggan Hill". They didn't know what to think. One outspoken 15 year-old was skeptical—said it was impossible and I was dreaming. I agreed. I told them I was dreaming, but why say something's impossible before you even try it?

I had a blank bulletin board at the front of the class with the heading, "Kinds of Bridges". I had each of them go home and draw pictures of bridges they could think of. I got sketches of suspension bridges and simple post and beam. One girl drew a beautiful sketch of the Bridge of Sighs in Venice. We hung them up and looked at them for awhile.

Then I asked them to draw a design on graph paper for a bridge going across "Toboggan Hill". Most of the kids drew suspension bridges so I called our local utility company and asked if they had any cable. Sure enough! They had enough to redo the Mackinac Bridge and yes we could have it. I was elated and began envisioning a swinging suspension bridge behind our school.

At this point my director suggested calling a local university and asking them for help in the way of design. I called the University of Detroit and talked to their Structural Engineering Dept. They were more than willing to have my group (17 kids and 3 adults) come down to their campus and attend a class on bridge design. I love being on a college campus so was quite enthused about this prospect. We'd go down to the college, attend the class and then go eat lunch in the student cafeteria.

It was great fun, the kids loved it and we learned an important formula—the relation between the length of a span and the width of a truss. Now we were armed and dangerous. The professor we met there, a young African—we called him Dr. David— came out to our site to see what we were trying to do. I asked him if he thought it was possible. He smiled broadly and said, "For an engineer, nothing is impossible". He also gave us some great advice: keep it 1) simple and 2) easy to maintain.

We scrapped the suspension bridge design because it wouldn't be simple to build or maintain. It would require much less material, which was a very attractive advantage, but require very skilled workers and an almost constant maintenance situation. We decided on a simple post and beam arrangement with a supplemental truss system designed to use the materials we were getting from our utility company.

By the time winter rolled in we were busy constructing models of the design we had come up with. I wanted the kids to go through the process of constructing the bridge on a scale model, so they could see what had to be done and in what order. It was great fun. I divided the group into 5 groups of 3 and one group of 2 and made it a cooperative experience. I got to build one too!

From the very beginning of that year, we had been studying architecture with an emphasis on bridges. We were familiar with the columns of Greece and Rome and the arches of the Etruscans. We read the histories of some of the great bridges and some of the great tragedies that befell them. It became almost an obsession with me. I looked at every bridge with new eyes. I studied its structure and design and materials and aesthetic. I began to appreciate these artifices that combine

They became things of wonder and grace.

Sometime that winter, I mentioned the bridge project to someone in our school community. He told me his father had recently retired from the utility company after working there all his life planting poles. Aha! I called him immediately. He agreed to come with me to look at the poles and help me pick out some good ones.

We went down to the salvage yard and there was this mountain of poles—about 1500, all piled willy-nilly. We knew we needed them at least 30' long and fairly straight. No prob. We had an easy time finding our quota.

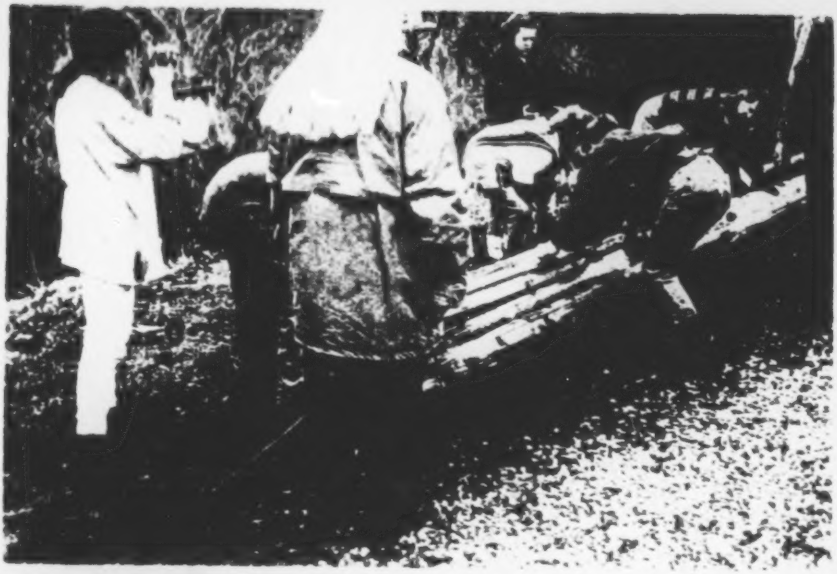
Someone else in our community knew someone who had a flatbed semi and would be willing to give us one haul. We went to the yard and there was a crew there with a crane for lifting poles. We asked for help. They gave us about 4 hours as we weeded through the pile. We managed to get 26 poles loaded just before quitting time. I had wanted to take about 32-36 just so we could pick and choose on site, but we'd make do.

And so, on a cold crisp late February morning, I came riding into the school parking lot on top of this semi trailer full of poles. We brought them on a Saturday to avoid the crowds of kids that just might complicate things a little. We had set up an unloading spot with railroad ties, and once the poles were untied, just give a kick and off they rolled into a neat pile. I can remember sitting on that pile sipping on a cup of coffee with my good friend Nome, and watching a flock of pure white snow geese fly overhead in the bluest morning sky. I'd never seen that before. I took it as a sign.

That Monday morning the kids all ran out to look at these huge poles. Some of them as long as 45' and weighing about 1600 lbs. I remember seeing a couple of fathers pointing and whispering and later learning of their concerns about the dangers of working with such huge things. Yes we would be careful.

We had recently watched a documentary on the building of the pyramids. Not only to see how they moved those 2000 lb. stones but also to get some ideas about how to make a documentary video. Our school had recently purchased a fine High 8 camera and I thought a video of the bridge project might be an interesting side project for some of my kids.

In the pyramid video, the ancient Egyptians moved those



huge stones by placing them on rollers. We did the same. That first morning, I put the number 1 on the chalkboard and said that was my goal for the day—to move one of those poles from where the truck dumped them, about 100' to our construction site. We went to work.

One of my boys knew how to tie a timber hitch. We laid down some old logs we found lying around as our rollers and everyone

grabbed hold of the rope. The pole flew along the ground almost effortlessly. That first morning the kids moved 4 poles and were elated. We were off to a great start.

Each morning I upped the goal and the kids always beat it. By the end of that week, we had moved all 26 poles to our site and had logged each one as to length.

Our original design had called for a span of 20' between each upright. That would've required 32 poles total. We only had 26 poles so we had to change our span to 25' between the verticals. We had to use each pole wisely.

We had decided on our site in late fall. It was the least environmentally disruptive. We only had to cut down one 3" diameter sapling and some brush. The course of the bridge afforded a sweeping curve as it ascended ever so slightly (1 foot every 25' span). The mental picture was quite beautiful.

Bud, the retired guy from the utility company who knew how to dig a hole and plant a pole showed up the next week with some strange looking tools. He called them a spud and a spoon. The spud was a 10' long flat shovel and was used for just breaking up the ground. The spoon, also 10' long, was a real exaggerated shovel for scooping out the broken ground. Bud demonstrated how to dig a perfectly round, smooth 4' deep hole. The kids got to work.

Planting those first poles was easy. We were going downhill and they just sorta slid into place. By the time the warm spring weather arrived, we were dealing with some pretty big poles. We were out to the middle now and needed to plant our largest uprights. These were the mothers of all poles. They needed to be at least 28' long. We made a kind of rough sluice by laying two logs together, and ran these big guys down the hill on that. Now to raise them up.

I won't go into all the details, but we learned some pretty fancy tricks with ropes and pulleys. Raising these big poles required the combined efforts of both our oldest groups—

about 35 kids—stretched out on a 100' rope outside the fall line of the pole. One, two, three, pull. Up, up it went, but over, over it fell. Our side guides couldn't hold it from falling to one side. Undaunted (and I mean undaunted; these kids didn't blink an eye at our obvious failure) we moved the big mutha back into position and tried again. This time, she fell into place.

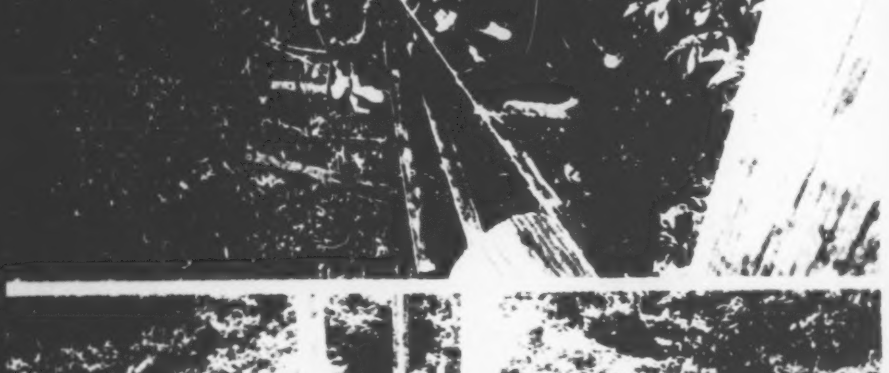
And so it went. By the time summer was pressing her presence upon us, we had planted all the poles and started to construct the horizontal beams. Now it was beginning to look like a bridge!

In addition to the poles, the utility company had given us those cross members that actually support the wires. They're 8' or 10' long and are essentially 4x4's. They worked perfectly for our deck boards. Now the deck was designed to be 4' wide so we just laid down a bunch of these 8' 4x4's and cut them in half with a chain saw. Voilà! We had deck boards.

At the end of our school year for '92-'93, we had completed 2 25' sections with decking. We could actually walk out on it and stare at the poles just waiting for their load to be laid on them.

Now that we had deck boards in place, all the kids in our group were able to carve their names into them. We put the years down and then Bud's name on the first, mine on the second and all 17 of my kids' following after. It was a significant gesture. They were a part of the structure themselves. We all felt a sense of immortality, somehow.

Just as a side story: On the morning before our Grandparents day, when everyone would be visiting the school and all the kids would be showing their parents and grandparents the bridge, I was walking out on our 2 completed sections and noticed a cracked support arm. This arm goes across the 4' between the uprights and our horizontal beams rest on them. Well, here was one cracked pretty seriously. I panicked. I didn't know what to do. I worked most of that morning on it by myself trying to repair it to no avail. The next morning, I discussed it with the group. They presented various ideas and we decided to try one. It involved everyone. The entire group had to play a part. We decided to lift the end of the section that rested on that arm, and while the group held it in place—we only needed 2"—we would try to replace the cracked arm with a good one. Well, we set up a double-snatch jig with our



pulleys and yes, up she went, first one side, then the other.

We finished our repair job with less than an hour to go before the visitors would arrive. My feeling of relief was tremendous, but also I'd learned a lesson in community. I couldn't have fixed that cracked arm myself; I needed the group.

We ended our school year by watching the unedited version of our docutary. It was great. The kids sat there transfixed, watching themselves doing the incredible. There were moments of hilarity we rewound and played again and again. But most of all, they saw themselves working together to accomplish something much bigger than any one could do by themselves. It had been a tremendous experience for all of us. I had hoped we'd finish the bridge, but all in good time.

About a week after school was over, we had a parent-and-child workday. It was wonderful watching the kids. They were so proud of all they'd done and so eager to share what they knew. And the parents who hadn't seen the bridge yet were amazed at its size.

It went well. We managed to finish a whole section—put up two horizontals and decking! The parents seemed to really enjoy rolling those huge poles out across the finished sections and hoisting them into place. There was a lot of self-pride floating around that day.

By this time the whole community was into the bridge symbolism. A beautiful black-and-white photo taken and processed by a girl in my group appeared on the cover of the final edition of our school newsletter. Our school's auction committee asked if they could use the bridge as the theme for next year's fundraiser. "Bridge to the Future" became the theme for our Annual Giving Drive and people were able to get their names on plaques that will be placed on the planks of the bridge. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross bought the first section of handrailing with her donation of $500. The bridge had become a focal point for our community and it wasn't even half done yet. It was a powerful symbol—not being done. One could look at it and see all the uprights standing in their place. The course of the bridge was obvious. The vision was unfolding and had an air of necessity and inevitability.

The next September brought me a new batch of kids. Because our school is arranged in a way that allows most kids to be in the same group for 2 years, I was lucky enough to get some of my best workers from last year back.

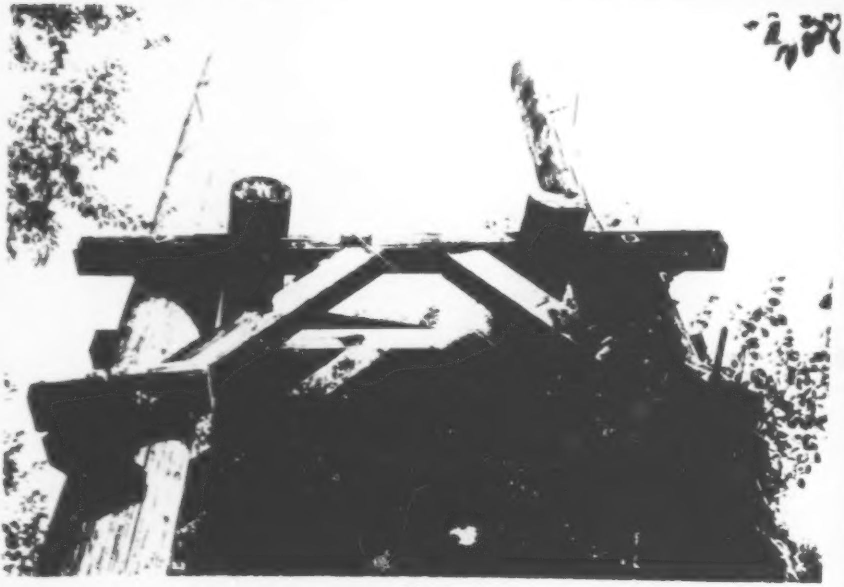
It started out slow and painfully. We had lots of rain for one thing, and were now working at the bridge's highest point. It was extremely difficult. We'd go out in the morning and try to place a horizontal beam across the next section, and one end would fall. Then we'd get one end up and the other would fall. Everyone was frustrated. We just couldn't find the process. And the kids from last year lorded it over the new kids. And the new kids didn't feel it was their bridge. And one girl thought it was the ugliest thing she'd ever seen and it was highly dangerous and someone was going to fall and break their neck for sure. I was offended and angry and perplexed and didn't know how to deal with it.

It was a tough fall. By the time the snow made it too dangerous to continue, we'd finished sections 4 and 5 out of 7. We were beginning to climb the hill beyond and work would be much easier come Spring.

One of the new jobs we had begun that Fall was the installation of our truss system. We had originally designed a simple Warren Truss that would also serve as a handrail. We built a prototype. It was a failure. It failed because of the materials we had to work with. We had to come up with something else. In the middle of one of my many sleepless nights, I saw it—the simplest of the simple—a King Post Truss. And the materials had lent themselves perfectly! It would be integral and lightweight and a triangle. You just can't beat that combination.

The old Warren Truss idea involved building the truss itself away from the bridge and then hauling it into place. Our prototype was heavy and cumbersome. The new King Post Truss could be constructed in place and each of the components was easy to manage. We designed a jig where we could precut all the pieces. We installed a Truss system on our first section. It decreased our flex to almost nothing! It made the bridge rock solid. We were elated.

As soon as the snow would allow, we were back to work. We had a crew setting the big horizontals in place, a crew putting the decking boards on, a crew constructing the truss assemblies, a crew putting up the handrails and a 3 stage assembly line cutting and nailing our handrail sections together. Now the last stage of our assembly line operation could be done by children of all ages. After the boards were



cut to the proper length, the kids could nail the sections together. We needed 112 sections in all. Plenty of work for the all the younger children who came to my bridge class every Thursday afternoon.

Work on the bridge progressed steadily. The end of another school year was fast approaching. Would we finish the bridge?

Along about mid-May, my wife suggested we have a Bridge Camp sorta thing and invite all the kids from last year and this year to finish the bridge together. Well, I'd promised last year's crew a chance to be there for the final moment, so the idea became reality. Dates were set so everyone could be there, invitations were sent out and the pressure to finish the bridge by school's end was gone. As a matter of fact, one of the kids remarked we'd better slow down a little or there wouldn't be anything left to do at camp.

I remember sitting in a staff meeting and one of the teachers brought up the fact that some of the kids were walking across the bridge to get to their theater classes and because there were no handrails on most of it, we'd better not let that happen. I sat back in my chair and let that sink in. The kids had begun to cross the bridge! It was being used to get from one side to the other. Sure you had to jump a little 2' jump at the end, but still, all the way across'. We'd have to make an announcement that no one is allowed to cross the bridge until further notice. I thought it was a glorious issue.

Well, school ended. The kids carved their names into the bridge and we watched our unedited video of the past year's efforts. The goodbyes on that final day were softened by the thought of Bridge Camp coming up soon and the wondering about who would come.

Doing something for the first time is always a perilous proposition, and so it was with Bridge Camp.

A couple of days before it was to start, Phil asked me how many adults were going to be there to help me. Gee, I never thought of that. He wanted to know about safety goggles and work gloves and supervision. I became apprehensive and made a few calls to some parents inviting them to come and be a part of the crew. All answered noncommittally, that sure they'd like to and maybe.... I was worried. What if 35 kids showed up? There wasn't that much work to keep them all busy. Well, we'd have to wait and see.

Monday, first day of camp, I drove out with 5 guys in my van. Now this would be great! We got to school; a student from last year was there waiting. As the morning rolled on, more kids showed up and by lunch time we had a good, manageable-size crew of 11

Tuesday was hot. The crew size increased to maybe 12-14. We worked hard and knocked off at 2 and went swimming.

Wednesday, crew size up to 15-18. Lots of socializing and hanging out. Some kids from 2 years ago show up with fire crackers! Great! I feel overloaded. Phil calls from his sanctuary up north and asks how things are going. I dump. I realize I've provided a FREE! week-long, meaningfully-engaged activity for young adolescents and it was growing like the Blob. That night I called more parents and got some commitments. Hurrah! Adults with power tools!.

Thursday came. The crew had grown to 20-22 kids, but I was ready. There was something for everyone. More adults enabled me to have more work stations. We got tons done. It looked as if tomorrow would be the last and final day of bridge building. It would be done tomorrow!

Friday. RAIN! It was raining! Steady—that kind of soaking rain that goes on and on. The phone rang. "Well, are we going to work on the bridge today?" I decided to go.

When we get to school, it had stopped raining. The weather had actually helped in that it limited the number of workers to just 5 or 6. We got to work as fast as possible. We covered the areas we were working in with tarps and wrapped the electrical connections with baggies. We worked right through lunch. We were getting very near the end. A few more boards to go and a downpour came. We had to stop. I couldn't believe it. About an hour's worth of work left and we would've finished on time. Oh well, just another one of those setbacks.

We had one last work day a couple of weeks later and finished it. It was a rather anticlimactic event. No drums, no fanfare; just a simple "That's it."

We looked at each other, shook hands and deep, deep down we knew what we had done.

On Sept. 25, 1994, we had a 'Bridge Dedication Day'. The community shared in the celebration. We thanked all the people who contributed labor or materials and recognized those to whom we were grateful. It was a glorious day. I was a little nervous—the bridge had never held that many people before. It did fine.

There's a documentary video available for $10 from Upland Hills School that chronicles the entire project. Write Ted, 727 Golf, Royal Oak, MI 48073 or call him or Phil Moore, the director, at (810) 545-4549.

Here follows an article written by a graduate student from Canada, Adam Adler, who spent a week with us in The Free School last winter working, observing, taking notes. Overall, Adam's visit was a real pleasure for us. Unlike many observers, he was alive, participatory, creative, involved, appreciative. We missed him when he left! He has sent us the paper he wrote for his course, for which we are grateful. I have taken the liberty of adding footnotes—not to put down his observations, but as a way of correcting his data when it went awry, which I hope is understandable for a school like ours that works with so little prestige, money or institutional support! My intent is certainly not to discount Adam's powers of observation or his recommendations for teacher training, both of which are right on the money!

Adventures among the Granola People:
A WEEK IN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

by Adam Adler

Prepared for Dr. Laverne Smith

University of New Brunswick at Fredericton

This paper is a report of my findings following a week-long visit to the Free School in Albany, New York. It is a record of my reactions to the personal and professional exchanges which occurred during that visit.

I first learned about Alternative Education through a psychology class at the University of Western Ontario in the summer of 1994. I became interested in the idea of individual learning styles and student-determined schooling, particularly in the light of the somewhat inflexible education I received in my public school career. This interest was nurtured in my BEd studies at UNB, where I learned about different possibilities for school organization and Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. I became concerned about being "stuck in a rut"—teaching exactly the same way that I had been taught, with little or no innovation and repeating the same mistakes as the generations of teachers before me. It was then that I conceived the idea for this project: an extended visit to an Alternative School. My primary goals were to examine my newly formed ideas about education, and to find those aspects of

Alternative Education which I felt might work for me.

I approached Dr. Laverne Smith, Dean of Education at UNB, for financial assistance and advice, and was happy to obtain both. I then set about contacting some Alternative Schools. My first choice was the Sudbury Valley School in Framingham, Massachusetts, primarily because it was quite well known and had been mentioned in several of my textbooks. The response I received from them was cool. They set aside certain days during the year for visitors and usually admitted them for single day visits only. While I was interested in seeing that school (and would still welcome a visit) I felt that the nature of this project demanded an extended visit of at least a week. I contacted the Free School in Albany, New York, and received a warm and interested response from co-director Nancy Mittleman. She recommended that I do some background reading on the school before my visit, and suggested that I come prepared to become involved. With everything arranged, I eagerly awaited March break.

DAY 1

We began the day with a community breakfast at 8:30. When I say community, I refer to staff, students and some parents. Many of the families live in brownstones on the same block as the school, owned either by them or by the school. Some parents are involved with the day-to-day running of the school—often enough that the line between teacher and parent is sometimes thin. Students are not permitted to bring food into school[1]—everybody eats the same meals. Unlike the fare in many public school cafeterias, meals here are varied, healthy, and appetizing. Given the fact that the meals are provided for the students from the school's budget[2] (which is significantly smaller than the average public school budget), I refuse to accept that the same could not be done in public schools. Breakfast consisted of muesli with fresh fruit andyogurt. This led my aunt (with whom I was staying) to dub the Free Schoolers "the Granola People"—thus the title.[3] The benefit of communal meals that all of the students are looked after, mind and body. This removes the risk of poor nutrition and the obstacles to learning that an empty stomach can cause. It creates a sense of equality while teaching the students about good nutrition. It also generates a sense of gathering and gives structure to the day.

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[1] Actually, kids *could* bring in their own food if they chose or if their parents told us there was a good reason for it, but most of the time, it just doesn't happen. I guess most kids don't especially want to! But it's not a rule, one way or another.

[2] The school has a separate food budget which is largely covered by the government's "free and reduced breakfast and lunch" program for low income families, the only government money we receive. Perhaps one or two families might occasionally have to pay a little, being ineligible, but not often.

Lesson number one was in paper airplane making; that is to say—I was taught how to make paper airplanes by five year old Keenan. This gave me the opportunity to examine one of the tropes which I had studied at UNB—that as teachers, we tend to look at children for what we can teach them, rather than for what they can teach us.

Wandering downstairs, I encountered the "downstairs kids"— grades one through eight. Lesson number one was in paper airplane making; that is to say—I was taught how to make paper airplanes by five year old Keenan. This gave me the opportunity to examine one of the tropes which I had studied at UNB—that as teachers, we tend to look at children for what we can teach them, rather than for what they can teach us. In this activity, Keenan was developing cognitive and meta-cognitive processes, bodily/kinesthetic skills, visual/spatial skills. pre-math skills, and interpersonal skills. I can't think of many traditional teaching scenarios which involve this many learning angles while boosting the student's self-esteem. It also calls into question the idea that being older than students necessarily makes teachers more knowledgeable than students. Another line had just become thin— that of teacher and student.

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[3] We rather regret Adam's description of us as "granola people," as it makes us sound like hippy dilettantes, not to be taken seriously by one who might read only his title. Adam's intent was not to mislead, I'm sure. As he saw clearly, we "amateurs" have been conducting school with great success among the so-called "disadvantaged" children in the inner city for twenty-seven years. Granola has rarely been on our breakfast menu in all those years!

I was then dragged (and I mean DRAGGED) off to feed the goats and chickens with Kenny (8) and Zach (10). The animals were kept in a pen on a partially-treed, hilly lot beside a brownstone owned by the school. The milk and eggs are used by the school, while the students learn about conservation and agriculture through caring for the animals.

Next came a class led by Charlene. Charlene first came to the Free School ten years ago to do some occasional poetry teaching— and she never left. Six students aged five to ten chose to participate in this class. This is another important aspect of Alternative Education that students will learn better because they chose the activities through which they will learn, giving them ownership of their learning and maintaining their interest and enthusiasm. Some of the students read on their own while those who were not yet able had others read to them. Sometimes there was a discussion of one of the pieces. Some of the students took turns sitting beside Charlene and using visual imagery to conceive original poetry. What was important was that there was a lot of good poetry going around being written. read and absorbed.Charlene commented that this gives them "a road in to learning how to read and write" while giving them something which is totally theirs and which is shared with and ratified by their peers.

...: students will learn better because they chose the activities through which they will learn, giving them ownership of their learning and maintaining their interest and enthusiasm.

After lunch was a history lesson with the school's founder, Mary Leue. who retired from the directorship of the school several years ago. but who continues to teach lessons and publish *ΣKOΛE, the Journal of Alternative Education*. The class was discussion-based with direction of the discussion alternating between teacher and students. The order of discussion went roughly like this: an overview of various historical periods, eighteenth century history, the guillotine, capital punishment (of particular local import at the time, as the Governor of New York was at that very moment bullying through a capital punishment bill), violent crime and suburban drug trade into Albany. Mary explained that her goal for the students was to have them understand the historical processes which generate and affect events, to gain a better understanding of events today. With their interest in history piqued, some of the students decided to finish the afternoon at one of their homes watching the historical drama "The Name of the Rose".

I took advantage of the students' disappearance to talk to Mary about the Free School. She said that young people "have a habit of picking and choosing what's interesting to them." Last year she led a class on the history of religions, at the request of some of the students. Mary criticized Magnet Schools—subject-specialty schools designed to foster socio-economic mixing and maximum personal development—as an exciting novelty. She added that they are still neighborhood schools which lack in personal attention to the students, and that their specialization doesn't make sense. Mary said that the Free School had no connection to the government or even to governmental alternative schools, saying that "anything can be ruined." The benefit to this is that they can carry on in the philosophy of the school, without having to bend to the demands of the system which caused the formation of the school. Part of their funding comes from renting out local, school-owned property. The rest of their budget comes from the $150 monthly tuition, which is charged on a family income-based scale.[4]

Presently the only alternative teacher training program in the United States is offered by the National Coalition of Alternative Schools. It costs approximately $1,000 per year per participant. The qualification obtained is not recognized by the government. In twenty-six years, the Free School has never hired a teacher. People just come and are accepted as part of the community as volunteers. The money may be found to pay them after a year or two if they choose to stay on.

The result is a very low staff turnover and a consistent learning community. The advantage to teaching in an Alternative School is that just as the students are able to choose the nature of their learning, the teachers are able to choose what, how and when they will teach. Teachers are never forced to teach age ranges or subjects with which they are not comfortable. The disadvantages are lower pay and fewer benefits.

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[4] The "renting" we do is actually based on voluntary donations. Perhaps it ought also to be added that very few families at a time pay the full amount of our very low tuition. The average paid ranges between $50 and $100.

The school is led by two co-directors who perform the necessary non-educational tasks involved with running a school. Mary said that the directors should have another role within the school—be it teacher, cook, or janitor—so that they maintain an active involvement within the community. Each teacher supervises a specific class, loosely organized by age/development level, as well as being generally responsible for a specific subject area; that is to say, they are available to teach within that subject area if there is a group of students who want to learn in that modality. Mary identified humanism[5] as a major focus of the school: teachers working with and for students to achieve the best personal and academic growth possible for each student. Learning is student-directed, student-centred, and activity-based. Mary clarified [this] by saying "The way to teach reading and writing is by having them read and write." Students come to the school only if they want to and can remain so long as they do SOMETHING.[6] I asked Mary why there was no Alternative High School in Albany. She replied that they had started one several years ago, but that when that group of students had finished there was no longer a need[7] for one.

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[5] Although this is not a term I would use, as it carries implications that could be considered either political or religious. What I might have said was that we are person-centered, rather than group-centered in our educational methods and philosophy.

[6] Gee, I hope I didn't say that! We really don't mandate kids' choices of activities—even including the notion that they must do "something!" No, they don't have to do "anything!" Except maybe breathe. The issue may sound trivial, but I really think it's profound in its implications concerning the difference between token freedom for kids and the real thing. I don't know any other alternative school except Summerhill and Sudbury Valley (and Jerry

At the heart of the school are the democratic council meetings. involvement within the community. These meetings are generally the centre of most Alternative schools, but I was curious as to their significance at the Free School. Whenever there is an issue to resolve or a decision to be made which affects the community, a meeting is held. The possibility of my visit, for example, was discussed and decided on by the staff and students in a group meeting. The meetings are democratic—one student or teacher, one vote. Through the meetings the students learn to take turns speaking, attending and objective witnessing, compassion and sensitivity, and gain a sense of stewardship of their school and community. Openness and honesty rule. I was eager to observe my first meeting, and hopeful that I would be allowed to do so.

When I had finished talking with Mary, I was surprised to find that everyone had gone home. It had seemed so natural (and unschool-like) that people should just be there that I forgot that this WAS a school which finished at three o'clock. Reinforced by the close involvement of parents, this was not just a school (students) or a job (teachers), but a way of life—albeit the "working" part— defined only by the things which were achieved by the participants. Without the people who formed the community. the building felt very lonely and empty.

DAY 2

Today Charlene was sick, and the younger students had been promised another poetry class today. They took the initiative and asked Nancy if I could be their teacher for the day. I wasn't as prepared as I would have liked, but I thought

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Mintz's now-defunct Shaker Mountain) that really understand this!

[7] I hate to keep correcting Adam, but actually, there *is* a great need for a secondary level alternative school locally. We just haven't been in a position to start one up (again), because our own kids have all wanted to go on into public schools—and we don't have any particular interest in taking on unknown adolescent kids without previous alternative school experience. It calls for skills none of has developed, to say nothing of serious money!

that I could do things somewhat approximating Charlene's style. I soon found myself sitting on a comfortable sofa in the library with Keenan (5), Mashama (6), Tiffany (6), and Jessalyn (7). We began with me reading poems aloud which they had chosen from an assortment of books. Jessalyn, who was just starting to read, also gave it a try. We discovered the following poem by Shel Silverstein, which has come to mean a lot to me:

Invitation

If you are a dreamer, come in,
If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar,
A hope-er, a pray-er, a magic bean buyer ...
If you're a pretender, come sit by my fire
For we have some flax golden tales to .spin.
Come in! Come in!

—*Where the Sidewalk Ends*, 1974 Snake Eye Music, Inc.

We discussed the poem awhile—what it meant to them and how it made them feel. They agreed and disagreed, and bounced thoughts off one another. Each of the students then took turns composing their own poetry. I wrote the poetry down, made copies to send home for their parents to see, and left the originals for Charlene. I was most amazed at Keenan, who dictated each line, then had me read back what he'd written so far. I later included it in an anthology of poetry which I was assembling for a literature-teaching course.

I Wish

I wish I were an eagle
'Cause I would have wings
and sharp teeth
and sharp claws
And I would have a beak
I would be able to catch fish good.
—Keenan, aged 5

This experience proved several things to me: first, that young children can enjoy listening to and discussing poetry; second, that young children can compose poetry which is meaningful to them and which can be appreciated by others. After each student finished their poem, it was read to and discussed with the other students. They reflected on what they liked about the poem, thus building each other's confidence and self-esteem. If anybody ever claims that this is not possible, I would say that they either haven't tried it, or are afraid to.

By then I had noticed a difference between the younger students and the senior group.The younger students were quick to include me in their activities; to talk to me about themselves and to ask me questions about myself. The senior students were a self-contained group who remained considerably aloof. While a couple of them showed some interest and openness, most of them showed signs that they would prefer I just go away. I later found out that they were generally aloof from everyone, particularly during their non-class time when they sat and discussed things that were important to them. During class time they interacted with the teachers much more freely and even allowed me to participate. This was understandable; this was their world and I was the visitor, and I had to play by their rules. I then decided to sit back, relax, and wait for them to come to me.

> *... this was their world and I was the visitor, and I had to play by their rules. I then decided to sit back, relax, and wait for them to come to me.*

Before lunch I sat in on a meeting with Nancy, Nicole (a cook from France whose son Joe was a senior at the school), and the senior class. They were planning a fundraising dinner called "Le Cochon d'Or". This project involved REAL work and REAL task commitment from the students. Each student took on jobs and would report back to the group on their progress. They were therefore responsible to their peers rather than their teachers for success or failure. By the end of this project, in which they would turn their school into a restaurant and provide a set-menu gourmet French dinner for the paying public, the students would have gained experience in menu planning, shopping, cooking, set-up and clean-up, serving, obtaining donations of money and ingredients, business communications, computer use and letter writing in a real work setting. The purpose of the fund-raiser was also a work project: a senior class trip to Puerto Rico to help build community housing.

At lunch time, Deb (kindergarten and music) asked me to teach that afternoon's music class. What excited me most was that I would have a solid 75 minutes to do music with an interested group of students. What bothered me was that I was totally unprepared, and was going to have to do the best I could for the students given what was on hand. I pulled my cassettes out of the car and chose a few songs which I thought might generate some discussion. I was, for the most part, wrong. What the students DID enjoy was singing along to the soundtrack from the movie "The Lion King," with which they were all familiar. We then tried some clapping exercises and some singing, but without preparation and a functional context, and with little prior knowledge of their tastes and abilities, this was only marginally successful. I think, given a series of lessons over time, we could have made some very exciting music.

At the end of the day, Mashama (6) called a council meeting. There had been an upset between her and some other students, and she wanted the help of the council meeting to resolve it. All of the "downstairs" students participated—sitting in a circle with Nancy, who was there not to run the meeting but as a staff participant. The students voted that Tiffany (7) would chair the meeting. Tiffany was still new to chairing, so was occasionally guided or kept on task by Nancy. All of the students had an opportunity to speak if they wanted to, but the meeting was largely guided by the senior students. They listened to each party's point of view, and made objective observations on what they heard. They made sure that the correct issue was being addressed. They commented on the questionable behavior, and negotiated a solution between the parties. Even if they weren't contributing, the younger students were attending and learning about the democratic process and problem solving. The meeting was concluded with a motion from one of the students, and everybody went home.

DAY 3

Whatever illness Charlene had had been contracted by two other teachers. As a result. I was asked to help with the "upstairs kids"—the preschool and kindergarten classes. We went to the park. We got very, very muddy. I wiped many, many noses. It was a lot of fun—being more a play monitor than a teacher. When we got back only one teacher was needed to supervise them, so I got a break.

I then observed Zach teaching a math lesson to his sister Nicole (9). Zach was proud of the fact that he was of grade five age but doing grade eight level math, something which he felt he would not have been able to do in a regular public school. I also noted that Zach did not use a calculator, something upon which many public school kids have been allowed or even encouraged to become dependent. Nicole had done no math until she was eight, when she suddenly decided that the time was right to begin. Less than a year later, she was completely caught-up. She said this might have been to catch up with Zach, but she wasn't really sure. Nicole proudly showed Sarah (8) the exercises she'd just completed, was suitably ratified with a "wow".

Just before lunch, another council meeting was called. Once again it was to resolve a behavioral conflict between some of the students. In this case, the problematic behavior was the result of some personal problems of one of the students, as was made known to the council by Nancy (with the student's permission). This was followed by the same kind of contributions from the students as at the last meeting, but with the inclusion of a lot of warmth and emotional support for their troubled peer. It was a wondrous thing to behold. Keenan invited me to join the circle, but still feeling like a foreigner, I elected to remain an outside observer. The meeting was concluded, and we all went for lunch.

After lunch the "downstairs kids" went to the park, the preschoolers had a nap and the kindergarten kids had combined story time and play time. The school was suddenly very peaceful. For the kindergarten kids there seemed to be no difference between play and work. Those who wanted to play, did. Those who wanted to work in their workbooks, did. In one corner, a student sat reading a story to another student, who was not yet able to read. It was clear that student-directed learning could work even at this young age.

DAY 4

On Wednesday night a huge snow storm hit Albany. In addition, several more teachers became ill. It was decided that there would be no school on Thursday: fine for me; I needed a rest.

At breakfast on Friday, I talked with Nancy about teaching-interns. I asked her, hypothetically, if they would take an intern if offered a certain sum of money by a teacher training institution. She did not like the idea, stating that they would not want to change the way they did things to accommodate the intern and the requirements of the teacher-training institution.[8] Nancy explained that interning at the Free School worked for "special students," such as myself, who were specifically studying Alternative Education and who came to investigate and learn. Interns mustn't come with an agenda; that is to say, they must come with the intention of changing the way they think about education, rather than aiming to impose their ways on the community. They must be open to try new things and to participate in more areas than just teaching their subject. Above all, they mustn't create work for the Free School— they must learn through observation and participation, and not expect to be hand-trained. As Nancy said, "Alternative Education is learned, not taught", just as Alternative Education focuses on learning rather than teaching.

I was sad to leave at the end of the day. I wished that my March break was another week longer, so that I could stay and help with "Le Cochon d'Or", write more poetry, and perhaps do a more successful music lesson. I felt like I had only just begun to learn.

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[8] We've never *received* money from a teacher-training institution, but we wouldn't turn it down if it were offered on terms we could accept! The issue of "accommodating requirements" isn't one about which we would have any *general* policy. It would be decided on its merits, as it actually arose with some specific student from some specific institution. In fact, we have had several interns from teacher training programs and have had no problem working out accommodations with their requirements, including Syracuse University, the State University here in Albany, Russell Sage in Troy, Antioch and Friends' World College, among others.

With warm hugs and an open invitation to return,[9] I drove back to the 'Great White North'.

Implications for Teacher Training Institutions

> *I ... find it hypocritical that teacher trainees are constantly being lectured about flexible planning, individualization, student-centred learning, process, and about NOT lecturing—in classes which are inflexible, institutional, professor-centred and product-oriented.*

I wonder if much of what we are learning at teacher's college is teacher survival skills rather than how to encourage learning. This is perhaps a reflection of the emphasis in schools on product and measurable learning rather than process and development. I also find it hypocritical that teacher trainees are constantly being lectured about flexible planning, individualization, student-centred learning, process, and about NOT lecturing—in classes which are inflexible, institutional, professor-centred and product-oriented. If teacher trainees are to convincingly absorb the importance of WHAT we are being taught, then there is a need for greater modeling at faculties of education.

Alternative Education presents several implications for faculties of education. The first implication is that each teacher trainee arrives with different developmental strengths and needs, which are not always addressed in the assembly lines of post-secondary institutions. A change in emphasis from strict course requirements to individualized developmental plans could alleviate this, and set a good example for public schools. Such a change would require arestructuring of faculties of education, to allow greater restructuring of faculties of education, to allow greater student direction and more involvement of mentor teams.

The second implication is that more emphasis should be placed on diversification and student-centred teaching strategies, if that is how we are ultimately expected to teach. Given the amount of de-streaming and mainstreaming with which new teachers will increasingly be faced, there is a need for organizational and pedagogical strategies which will enable the teacher to truly teach to the benefit of each student. An overview course in alternative educational practices, as well as a course in Alternative Education, would inform trainees as to the choices available for teaching style and classroom organization, outside of the standard public school style. As part of such courses, a link could be established with a number of Alternative Schools which would give trainees the option of being involved in visits such as the one I had at the Free School. This would give concrete experience to the concepts learned in class, and allow trainees to weigh the different styles in order to determine the best balance for them. Over the past year, I have found a growing dissatisfaction in my peers with the education system into which they will go. Some of them have even spoken of opening an Alternative School, so that they can provide an education which benefits their students rather than the system. Courses in Alternative Education would better prepare these trainees for the task they hope to achieve. Conversely, such courses might generate pro-educational change in the public schools, so that there is less need for Alternative Schools.

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[9] Which we'd love to see happen! We hope Adam doesn't feel put down by these notes! As he says, he felt that he had just begun to learn. At that rate, he is already miles ahead of most people!

Thanks to:

Dr. Laverne Smith, Dean of Education at UNB, for your encouragement, advice and support .

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Cindy, Robert, and Zachary Lauzon, for putting me up and putting up with me for the week in Albany.

Keenan, for taking my hand and guiding me into your world.

PUERTO RICO JOURNAL (Cont'd.)

by Chris Mercogliano

6/12/95

We gathered promptly at 5:45 a.m. to saddle up our two generously loaned mini-vans and head down to JFK airport to catch our flight to San Juan. The plan to tie our mountain of gear onto luggage racks on the roofs was quickly scratched on account of a pouring rain. Miraculously, we managed to stuff the two drivers, the twelve of us and our gear inside the vehicles. Maybe stretch van would be a better name. At any rate, the "sardine express" left more or less on schedule, and despite rush hour New York City traffic, we arrived at the airport with lots of time to spare.

The kids' excitement was palpable. Jesse, age 12, who only recently fled to us from the public schools, had never flown before and even admitted to being frightened in the days approaching the trip. He appeared this morning with a duffel bag large enough to house a family of four. Neither Isaiah and Mike, two of the other older boys in the group who also came to us late in the game seeking refuge and a second chance, had ever been away from their families for any extended length of time. They were quite a sight as they spent a half an hour doing back flips on the hard tile floor of the TWA terminal. Although it was obviously making airport personnel a little uneasy, Missy and I didn't have the heart to tell the boys to stop. They badly needed an outlet for their anxiety, and this was the one they had chosen. Thankfully, since we were a school group, they let us board the plane early.

The kids who had never flown before loved the flight, which was quite pleasant, and our host and co-founder of Building Community, Ruel Bernard, was there in San Juan to meet us when we landed. Our first impression of Puerto Rico was the high heat and humidity which greeted us the moment we deplaned. Thankfully, Ruel's vehicle was a cargo van with no seats, and so we were able to pile our luggage in and then sit on it for the hour-long ride up into the mountains south of the capital.

Villa Sin Miedo, the village without fear. We arrived at our solid new home in this former squatters' village in the

Puerto Rican rain forest just before dark and proceeded to devour two loaves of bread (one white, by popular demand—it's cheaper, Chris!), several packages of cold cuts and a jar of peanut butter and jelly. Some of the kids are in no hurry to come down from the excitement of the day's travel, but it appears that the constant serenading of hundreds of invisible tree frogs, called *coquis* because of the sound they make, is beginning to have a calming effect.

Any regrets I might have had about just suddenly dropping everything I was doing back in Albany (the other teacher who had been planning to come needed to be with her gravely ill mother) to help bring this group of wild things down to Puerto Rico melted away instantly when I fired up old Mac here and watched him smile that sweet smile back at me. Home is where your Macintosh is!

Well, we're here, safe and sound, a long, long way from home. What will tomorrow bring?

6/13/95

The day began suddenly with a pre-dawn mosquito attack, expertly focused on my uncovered extremities. I managed to scratch both hands raw while I tossed and turned, trying to sleep a little more; and then a beautiful early morning rain woke me up for the second time. Two small lizards moved in with us during the night; the kids are fascinated with them.

"TO THE SHOWERS!" was the 7 a.m. call of the wild. I can't believe the kids woke up this early, having gone to sleep well after eleven. I guess they're still pretty excited. The cool rain barrel water proved to be little deterrent to an adolescent's obsession with being clean. (I think the kids are using their insect repellent as much for deodorant purposes as for anything else. I haven't seen a single mosquito yet today.)

Ruel says that we are part of a community of about sixty families who came together fifteen years ago from points all over—even New York City— to reclaim this land for themselves. They have persevered, surviving government retribution, Hurricane Hugo, which devastated this mountain top; and finally with the help of the World Council of Churches, they have come to own the land upon which the village now sits.

Presently, says Ruel, the people of Villa Sin Miedo have grown somewhat apathetic, and community projects only seem to materialize when he's around. Without a crisis, the community seems to lack direction. I can't wait to see where we will fit into the picture.

Wanting to give us a little more time to land in this tropical climate and incredibly lush surroundings, Ruel took us to an idyllic waterfall/swimming spot in the rain forest national park a few miles from here. The kids explored and swam, chased foot-long lizards, jumped into a deep pool from an eight foot-high rock ledge; and we all ate these exotic fruits—*puma rosa*—that I picked from trees growing right beside the rushing mountain stream. What a paradise. The kids resembled a multi-color family of beautiful young otters, splashing and playing together around the cascading waterfall.

The community basketball court has become the meeting place for our kids and some of the local Villa Sin Miedo boys. Manuel, age 13, stopped by looking for a game with our kids while Missy and I were cooking dinner. Coming here five years ago with his mother and two brothers after growing up in the Bronx, his passable English enabled us to have a pretty interesting conversation. His dream when he becomes a man is to go to Miami and then to India. When Missy asked him why, his response was, "To explore."

While I was buying food at the market in the slightly larger village down the hill from here, three different older men came to me at various times during my brief shopping spree and simply extended their hands to me, smiling all the while. With them speaking no English and me speaking no Spanish, that was it; but it was really sweet. I felt very welcomed by them.

After another ravenous feeding frenzy (lunch), the kids helped to bring down buckets full of gravel to pave the outdoor kitchen and dining areas with. Soon a lesson in the power of the tropical sun began to make itself known. Sun block, shirts, and hats notwithstanding, some of the fairer-skinned kids began to show signs of sunburn; thankfully none too serious. We're grateful that Betsy sent us off with some aloe gel which is taking care of any discomfort. Tomorrow we're off to a nearby and much newer squatters' village to find out who can use our help.

6/14/95

Ruel's electric fan defense worked like a charm and I didn't suffer a single bite last night. It was good to sleep soundly. The kids all slept late, catching up on theirs, too.

Change of plans #7... we decided to remain at home to make some needed improvements around here, where there is abundant shade, in order to give the kids a rest from the sun. Everyone worked like demons possessed; and entirely voluntarily, not counting a little initial cheerleading by our host, who professes to hate forcing anyone to work any more than they choose to. Between breakfast and a late lunch, several sets of shelves were built, a front terrace was nearly completed and a path to the outhouse was leveled and paved with gravel. Eat your words, A.S. Neill (the founder of Summerhill, who said that if you showed him a child who claimed to want to do "adult" work, he would show you one that was suffering from adult manipulation). Except for the heat and high humidity, the kids enjoyed themselves thoroughly. Ruel was quite impressed with how much we got done in such a relatively short time, and the kids proudly wore the satisfaction they found in their accomplishments.

Jesse offered to be my helper while we did the heavy, demanding and stressful job of ripping down six 3/4" sheets of plywood into strips for the shelving. I showed him how to use a tape measure, carpenter's square and chalk line, and before long he was my full partner, anticipating each next step in the operation and carrying it out professionally. He was a pleasure to work with. Yes, Virginia, this is the same 12 year old boy/man who had been cast off from the public schools only three short months ago, and whom I had taken to calling "the Fresh Prince of the Pastures" ["Pastures" being the name of a shoddy housing development built in Albany's South End ghetto a few years ago and already showing signs of deterioration], because of his entitled attitude toward life and his frequently obnoxious and arrogant behavior back home.

While everyone else is off at the waterfall, I'm taking advantage of the peace and quiet in order to get some of the writing work I brought with me done. It's absolutely wonderful to discover through my own direct experience what Helen and Scott Nearing were up to all those years in Vermont and then Maine. It feels very good, this blend of hard physical work, intimate connection with the natural world, time for reading and writing, and blessed solitude—such a scarce commodity in the chaotic urban universe we come from. There's no externally-generated schedule here and no need to hurry either. And no *#!@**# telephone! Suddenly I'm living the good life!

The kids already seem to have settled into natural rhythms of their own. For the moment, I think they've forgotten their former lives more or less entirely. Clearly, herein lies one of the healing ingredients in programs like Outward Bound. Everyone appears to be getting on well, both individually and collectively, with yesterday's sunburn being the only unpleasant occurrence thus far.

The food has been such a pleasure! Breakfast and lunch are "fend for yourself" affairs, and the kids are taking turns cooking dinners in pairs. Tonight Eve and Elisha are cooking vegetarian for us, and I just saw Gabrielle going by with an exotic bouquet of flowers that she picked for the dinner table.

6/16/95

No time to write yesterday. We left right after breakfast in a downpour to visit a few of the other "land rescues" where Ruel and his Building Community groups have worked in the past. As soon as we reached the coast, the van became a rolling oven; and thankfully, the trip wasn't too long. We arrived at Villa Hugo II (so named because this particular land rescue was launched in the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo) about mid-morning. Here, the kids got their first close-up look at some of the stark realities of third world poverty. This *villa* reminded me of a poor white American trailer park, except that the majority of the "houses" in this case were eight by twelve plywood shacks with flat, corrugated sheet metal roofs, one "window" and a door, each situated on a small lot, or *parcella.* Some were built with new materials and some with materials that were obviously scrounged. Often they housed entire families. Also, since the *villa* is located in a coastal flood plain, the houses were all perched, some quite precariously, on stilts of various kinds, and there were no trees anywhere to provide relief from the hot sun. And it was hot! We weren't exactly heartbroken to find out that no one needed our help right at that moment because working there at that time of day would have been brutal.

We visited several neighboring squatters' villages in succession, some older and more settled than others, while Ruel checked in with people he knew to find out what was happening and who needed help. We stopped in at one home in the three year-old *Villa Estancias del Sol*. It was very crudely constructed but more or less finished, and Ruel talked at length with a man named Julio. Short, ruddy and with a wide gap-toothed smile, Julio was obviously of some kind of Indian descent, but when Ruel asked him about it, he swore up and down that he was "100% Puerto Rican." Julio shares the two room shanty with his wife and three children, three little dogs, a kitten, and a handful of baby chicks that they are brooding. A young goat, a few chickens and a mare occupy a small "barn" out back.

It was here that I learned how a "land rescue" works. A group of poor families, anywhere from fifty to several hundred, organize themselves around the desire to establish a community where they can have a small plot of land that they can call their own. They set their sights on a sector of government-owned land, and a small "central committee" of community leaders makes policy and assigns plots. Usually, the original group "gets in free." Subsequent arrivals then must pay a fee for their land, and apparently at this point, time-honored human traditions like land speculation and corruption enter the picture. Larger villages sometimes split into factions vying for political and economic control and the founding idealism which got everything started in the first place gets lost in the shuffle.

Each "land rescue" has its own unique history, but each can tell of a stage of government repression where people were harassed, driven away, jailed, burned out, etc. After the initial "homes" in the community have been built, the settlers begin pressuring the government for title to what they now consider to be their land. Many, including our Villa Sin Miedo, are eventually successful. This leads to a second round of construction as residents attempt to improve their lot and built larger and more permanent homes. Julio, for instance, dreams of building a concrete house, double the size of his current one, and one that is on stilts so that the dust from the road won't flood into his house every day. He has dug some of the footings, but meanwhile he has no money and is caught in that modern lower class bind of needing a car to get a job and a job to get a car.

A number of the families in Julio's *villa* are at the stage of building adequate septic systems and have gotten bogged down for one reason or another. So, this seems to be the place where help is needed most and we are considering going back to work on two tanks that are sitting half complete and full of stagnant rain water. We'll have to talk this through with the kids, though, since this will be arduous, dirty and totally unromantic work; but so necessary for the continued well-being of the community. We'll see.

It's raining for the third time already this morning and the most of the kids are taking advantage of the extended darkness and the gentle sound and coolness of the rain by sleeping in. We ended our day yesterday with a delicious swim in the ocean, and after getting stuck for what seemed like an hour in a crowded supermarket on the way home, we didn't eat dinner until late. We surprised Isaiah with a birthday cake and candles and all went to bed exhausted. Another very full day.

We all assembled after everyone had gotten up, eaten (and showered, of course), and discussed how we wanted to spend our remaining time here on the island. Ruel explained that he had come to realize that the villages we had visited had a greater need for help with safe water and sewage systems than they did with house construction. Not at all surprisingly, every one of our ten Free Schoolers expressed an interest in returning to Villa Estancias del Sol for at least a couple more days to help Julio with his septic tank. Then we all agreed on a spending a day sightseeing and shopping in Old San Juan, and one more day making further improvements to our home here.

Our meeting concluded with Ruel telling us the dramatic history of Villa Sin Miedo: A major impetus for the squatters' movement had come from a land reform law passed by the Puerto Rican government some time back in the thirties or forties limiting the size of any land holding to five hundred acres. Land in excess of that was taken over by the government, which promised to then redistribute it to landless peasants, many of whom had been forced to migrate to the big cities like nearby San Juan, "home" to 100,000 squatters by 1950. But the government never followed through; and so groups of poor people, exasperated by the overcrowding and hopelessness of places like the slums of San Juan, began organizing themselves and in the words of the Puerto Rican government, "invading" parcels of government-controlled land in the surrounding countryside. The government vacillated in its response, but took tougher and tougher measures as time went on.

In 1980, fifty families from a coastal town near San Juan cut through a fence and took over 65 acres of vacant government-owned farm land. Within a week they were joined by 150 more families and by the end of their first year they had completed homes, a clinic, a church, two small grocery stores, a school for adult education and a communal garden. They called their community *Villa San Miedo,* and soon organizers began supporting other land rescues in the region and sought to make their efforts a national symbol of resistance to colonial oppression. This the government decided it could not tolerate, and so in 1982 a large police/paramilitary force swooped in and destroyed the entire *villa* and brutally drove out its residents, many of whom refused to quit. Over a hundred families remained together and were given sanctuary on land owned by the Puerto Rican Episcopal Church. Two years later, thanks to a gift from the World Council of Churches, they were able to buy the site of the current *villa,* an abandoned coffee plantation in the mountains about thirty miles from San Juan.

I'm happy to see that most, if not all, of the kids are actively keeping journals, something Missy and I have told the kids we very much want them to do, but which we haven't made mandatory. They are starting to line up at night to use old Mac here, and I'm already wishing we had a second one so that I could keep on with my writing. Zach, just turned ten and the youngest by far in this group, finally took me up on my offer to help him start his journal. He really has no concept of journal writing, and so my doing the initial typing freed up his words a bit. Jesse seems to already have made journaling a nightly ritual, which I am extremely happy to see. He doesn't write much; but he's doing it entirely under his own power, and that's what counts right now, as far as I'm concerned. If I required it of him, it would probably be the death knell of any real written self-expression on his part. Besides, journaling is an activity that should only be done for the purposes of one's own personal gratification and self-reflection; or for communicating one's experience to another person, as in writing a letter. I have offered to publish anyone's journal entries along with mine, if they'd like that.

6/17/95

Another exquisite day in this rain forest paradise—cool, breezy and no rain as yet this morning. There's a beautiful, milky-white half moon hovering over us still and the sun is just lifting itself over the hills to the east. Today we plan to have breakfast a little earlier and head off for *Villa Estancias del Sol* by nine.

We spent the day working on several projects at Julio's house. I quickly discovered the meaning of Building Community. One of Julio's neighbors from down the road happened by as we were just getting started, and before long he was leading the septic tank project that I had taken on while Ruel and several kids worked at shoring up a corner of the house that was sinking. A professional carpenter with a steady job working for a construction company that builds luxury hotels, Juan has already completed his septic system and his masonry skills are considerably better than mine. His fifteen years spent in New York City means he speaks passable English, too, and so we were able to have a running conversation while we laid the cinderblocks, with me as his helper. When I looked up at one point, there were Juan's wife and their four daughters standing beside the road watching us. Soon their girls were helping, too, and mixing in with our kids a little. Life in this villa is clearly anything but easy—no electricity, very little money for many families (Julio's family somehow survives on a $130/month welfare allotment), muddy, deeply rutted and unpaved roads—but at one point Juan looked me right in the eye and said, "Man, I love my country."

The kids are having a hard time dealing with the heat and the dirt, and today's work didn't lend itself real well to getting them involved and satisfied. We had a little real-life drama when Mike, who has a history of allergy problems, apparently was bitten by something and began having a pretty severe allergic reaction. He developed a raging rash, and his tongue and eyes swelled. Thanks again to Betsy for equipping us with a complete homeopathic first-aid kit. I gave Mike a dose of Rhus Tox every fifteen minutes and it seemed to do a lot to control the reaction. He was back to normal in a few hours, and the kids were very supportive while he was sick.

All in all, not a red letter day. Maybe *mañana* will be a better one.

6/18/95

In spite of the previous day's hardships, the kids willingly trouped out to the van at a little before nine this a.m. This time the van ride wasn't so oppressive because it was earlier, and the jobs today were a little better suited to the kids' interests and skills levels. There was some grumbling on the way, especially from the older kids; but when we arrived, the older boys and Elisha jumped right out on a scaffold that needed disassembling and then handed in the boards to the others for nail removing. It was a real group effort, the kind of job that they could really get into, and they did it well with no complaining whatsoever.

Missy took a smaller group with her and with the help of Julio's two sons began bucketing the several feet of rain water out of the septic tank so that we could take the next construction step, which is to plaster the two uphill-facing walls with cement to keep groundwater from seeping in and filling it up again. It was one of those "shoveling out the sand on the beach with a teaspoon" kind of jobs, but when the scaffold crew arrived a couple of hours later, they were already half done—and exhausted. The heat of the day was upon us again, but with the scaffold crew there to spell the others while they rested in the shade of the house, we were able to complete the draining in time for Julio and me to finish the interior parging before it was time to quit for the day. It was a hugely productive work day, especially considering the harsh conditions. I felt very proud of the kids and I know they felt proud of themselves.

Julio's wife had set us up with a life-saving cooler of ice water early in the day, and at about four o'clock, brought us out a wonderful dinner of French fries and fried eggs from their small flock of hens. They are extremely grateful for our help, and tomorrow Julio's wife has promised to cook us a Puerto Rican specialty and Julio promised the kids all rides on his mare. We are building community, and it's a beautiful sight.

We stopped at the waterfall on the way home, to wash and to cool off. A group of Puerto Rican men came by and started diving into the pool from the highest ledge, about twenty feet up. Jessie appeared there at one point and wanted to try it; and it was with a great deal of regret that I told him he couldn't. An incident like this brings into focus for me the problem of the disappearance of male initiation from modern culture. Females, thank God, still undergo potent forms of biological initiation; while adolescent boys are largely left to seek out inadvertent and unconscious forms (car accidents, daredeviling, gang membership, joining the army, etc.). Interestingly, Ruel says that the initial leaders of all the land rescues he knows are women. At any rate, the need that a soft, mouthy young adolescent male has for jumping into water from a scary high place is pretty clear. If I knew Jesse better and I was more confident in his ability to keep himself safe, and if help was closer by in case of injury, I would have thought twice about it. Oh, well; there simply are limits to what a school can do, I guess. This trip in and of itself, with the separation from parents for ten days, the life and death feeling of flying for the first time, the culture shock, and the doing without, has a certain initiatory quality to it. Mike has already said that he knows he is not going to go home the same person.

6/19/95

No rain for two days now, and the rain barrels are getting low; so Ruel has had to call a halt to the kids' morning shower ritual. The troops are not happy about this new development. Eve is now announcing that she wants to go home. The kids' anger led to a good discussion about water—where it comes from, pollution, waste, etc. American entitlement stands out like a sore thumb in a peasant culture such as the one in which we are now so totally immersed.

Yesterday I met Roberto, an original Villa San Miedo organizer who is now considered throughout the island as the godfather of the land rescue movement in Puerto Rico. A soft-spoken, friendly man in his late forties, Roberto was blown up by a land mine in Vietnam (a highly disproportionate number of Puerto Rican infantrymen were killed in the war), and now is a well-known poet as well. Roberto had just come back from a meeting of young environmental activists, and I hope to hear more about that before we leave. It would be a fascinating thing for the kids to interview him; but, I can hear that old refrain now—"not enough time!"

While we were in the van riding to *Villa Estancias del Sol*, I asked the kids whether they were in favor of the idea of using $150 of our food money to buy the materials for completing Julio's family's septic tank. No one even gave it a second

Julio's family's septic tank. No one even gave it a second thought and so we stopped at the building supply store on the way and arranged the delivery. Julio was out getting feed for his horse when we arrived (we were all wondering how he could afford to maintain a horse in addition to everything else). His sons, Jose and Jesus, helped us to get started with the forms for pouring a concrete lid on the septic tank. Just when I thought we might be getting used to the heat, along came what seemed to be the hottest day yet—not much breeze today—and it was real hard to get motivated in the direction of this kind of construction work. The oldest girls have had their fill of working in the hot sun to rescue land rescuers for a while, and so they just sat in our sweatbox of a van and read. Meanwhile Missy and a small group cut and tied more rebar for the footings for the new house and another group made a ladder for the septic tank job.

When Julio returned, his wife, who had been doing a small mountain of laundry by hand out back, and the girls, who had been reading, organized a trip to the grocery store to buy supplies for dinner. When they got back, the girls spent the better part of the day helping prepare dinner in the dark kitchen. Jesus and Jose provided another needed diversion from the oppressive construction work with horseback rides down the dusty road in front of their house. Our kids had a ball. Just like yesterday, a small feast appeared at about four, *pollo con papa* (chicken with potatoes) and a big salad this time. It was delicious, and I think very important that our older girls had spent the day with Julio's wife, whose only daughter is not yet three. We are already becoming one big family in certain respects. After dinner, Jose and Jesus guided us to their local swimming hole at a nearby river. The water was somewhat funky, but not too bad; and not wanting to insult our generous hosts, we all dove right in. We'll appreciate our semi-private and pristine mountain swimming spot all the more the next time we go there.

Tomorrow we are taking a much needed day off to rest and sightsee in old San Juan. Then, on Wednesday, we have decided to forego our last day "at home" in order to return one more time to Villa Estancias del Sol to see if we can't complete the septic tank project. It will require a really hard mental and physical push since a great deal of concrete will have to be mixed by hand in the brutal summer sun. As usual, we'll see.

6/20/95

On our way into the city to sightsee we stopped in the town nearest to *Villa Sin Miedo* for something or other, and suddenly there we were in the middle of a teachers' strike. One of the women leading the protest was a parent from the *villa* and she recognized Ruel and called him over to talk. It turns out that the school district superintendent is trying to fire the very popular principal of this local elementary school where a number of the *villa's* children attend, apparently for political reasons. When we arrived on the scene, a group of about forty adults and children were picketing and singing and chanting in front of the school where the superintendent was meeting with the principal and other school district officials. Ruel's friend asked if we would join them in support, and so we did. It was quite a scene, and great to see a group of people fighting for their own school. Tomorrow the media is scheduled to cover the protest and we were asked to return, which of course we agreed to do. More building community.

Well, we weren't your average-looking tourist group when we finally arrived in Old San Juan; but tourists we were for the remainder of the day. Ruel dropped us off in front of El Morro, a 16th century fort built by the Spanish to defend their beautiful new conquest from the British, who desired it equally. Several of the older kids predictably and promptly uttered their disapproval of the idea of visiting some dumb old historical sight, but the rest of us simply left them behind and disappeared inside the massive stone battlement, with the others eventually catching up to us. Predictably as well, a visit that was planned for twenty minutes stretched into an hour and twenty minutes because the entire group became so fascinated with the fort and didn't want to leave. Inside the fort museum, I offered a 25¢ reward to anyone who could find any mention or sign of the native people who were here when Columbus arrived. The kids searched and searched, but found nothing; and so we pondered why that might be so. It was a very illuminating discussion, as many of the kids already knew something about the nature of colonialism from their history classes back at school. We had to really hustle to be in time to meet Ruel at the *Plaza de Armas,* which took some doing in order to find it.

There was a handsome local boy feeding dried peas to an enormous gathering of pigeons on the *plaza* when we arrived.

He spoke some English and explained to our kids that they could buy bags of peas at a nearby grocery store. Soon those birds were in hog heaven. When we found Ruel, he was sitting talking to a beautiful old white-haired woman named Carmen, who is a retired teacher and school principal. She loved hearing about the school strike, and as it turns out, knew the entire history of the Villa Sin Miedo struggle. It is a small world after all.

6/21/95

Our last full day in Puerto Rico, and we have quite an agenda planned. First the school strike, then pouring—no, here they say throwing—concrete at Julio's house to finish his septic tank, then swimming at *our* waterfall one last time, and finally home to clean up and pack, so that we can leave for the airport tomorrow morning by nine.

There's a quiet, almost pensive feeling to the group this morning. Jesse's usual obnoxious banter is noticeably absent, for one thing. I think it's more than just anger at not being able to shower (still very little rain and the barrels are just about empty); I know I'm feeling sad at the thought of leaving tomorrow.

When we arrived at the striking school, there were no visible signs of protest going on; and so we went in to see what was happening. A handful of teachers and students were more or less just hanging around in their classrooms and didn't seem to know whether any final decisions had been made as to the fate of their principal, and so Ruel showed us the new library that Building Community built a couple of years ago. I ended up having a good conversation with Sr. Jose Lopez, the school's English teacher, who only arrived from New York City a few months ago. That's one of the amazing things about Puerto Rico—when you least expect it, someone suddenly starts speaking English to you in a perfect Bronxish accent. Jose says he loves it here; the kids are so much less alienated and so much more receptive to learning. I was interested to learn that he was one of five male teachers in the school; we agreed about how important it was for elementary-aged boys to have access to men in school.

We passed Julio and his two sons on the road into *Villa San Miedo*. They seemed a little surprised to see us, and perhaps not altogether glad. Each time we bring with us the promise of a grueling day's work at the height of the sun and heat. Besides, their septic tank had sat half completed for a long time, and maybe that was o.k. with them for now. At any rate, before long they joined us and began teaching us the Puerto Rican method of mixing concrete—on two pieces of plywood in the middle of the muddy road. Once again, Manuela and the girls went off to shop for the afternoon meal and the boys, despite the oppressive heat, jumped right in on the septic tank project, some helping finish the forms and tying the rebar together, and some mixing and hauling concrete. There was less complaining today than any other day; it was obvious that a determination to finish this onerous and unglamorous job was strongly held by all of us.

The girls spent the afternoon helping prepare the most elaborate meal yet, and then they got really involved with troweling out the concrete on the septic tank roof. Thankfully, the kids all seemed to find some real pleasure in this last stage of the process, and we had enough tools for anybody who wanted to get in on the act. As huge plates of the afternoon meal began appearing at around 3:00, a sizable rainstorm was visibly brewing in the nearby mountains. We had a perfect view of the slowly marching squall from where we sat enjoying the feast, and it was an incredibly beautiful sight. Suddenly, it was as though the mountain had been erased, and soon the first drops were upon us. We reluctantly put down our plates and all scrambled madly about, quickly putting tools and bags of cement under cover. While some of the kids headed to the van and others just stayed outside and played in the warm rain, the adults brought their plates into Manuela's kitchen to finish eating and wait out the storm. While it poured outside, we sat dodging drips from the roof and talking about Puerto Rican food; and finally, Julio—or Indio as his neighbors call him—admitted to us, proudly now, that he is of Taino Indian descent.

The rain lasted long enough for us to linger over our feast, and when it stopped we re-gathered ourselves outside for one final push. At one point, one of Julio's neighbors from across the way had miraculously appeared with a wheelbarrow, which speeded things up dramatically since we were mixing the concrete some distance downhill from the septic tank. I was totally impressed with the way these kids pitched in and worked together to get this job done. No kidding—when the going gets tough, the tough get going; and no one could doubt the toughness of these kids. The same grittiness and *chutzpah* that enabled them to raise the five thousand dollars that got us to this beautiful point on the earth's surface got them through this very difficult project.

When the last trowel was lifted from the concrete at about 4:30, there was a general roar of praise and thanksgiving, and congratulations all around. What had five days ago been a crudely constructed, half-done box sitting in the muddy clay half-filled with stagnant water was now a level and trim septic tank with the fitting for a toilet set into its roof, which now will become the floor of the planned new bathroom. While we all stood back admiring our work, Manuela came out smiling broadly, and we got to thank her again for all of her delicious cooking. The entire family was truly grateful to us for our help. After a half hour or so of tool gathering and cleaning, more congratulations, group photos and many farewells, we bounced our way out of *Villa Estancias del Sol* for the last time, one big filthy, happy family.

6/22/95

Many sleepy faces and bedraggled bodies as we arose at 7:30 and began packing and cleaning up. (The rain has yet to return here and at this point there's no water at all.) We had a surprise 14th birthday party for Manuel last night, and then the kids took the celebration down to the community basketball court where they played with Manny, Miguel, Alexi, and Juan David until about 10:30. The party ended with lots of happy/sad farewells and promises to write and come again, and even a little mention of a possible student exchange next year. As though we had all expended every last bit of energy that we had brought with us, the whole house was dead to the world by 11:30.

We arrived at San Juan airport in plenty of time and had a little closing ceremony there after checking our bags in. Ruel had gone to a trophy shop to secretly purchase award certificates, and after telling the kids that they were the best group of people this young that he had ever led, he presented each of us with one which read: "... in recognition of your valuable gift of energy and spirit."

On the flight home, the kids were unusually (for them) quiet, and many appeared lost in their own thoughts. And then you could see the excitement and anticipation building after our pilot announced that we were only twenty minutes from JFK. When the big jet finally came to a halt on the runway, Isaiah raised both arms in a triumphant salute and then fell to his knees in the aisle and kissed the floor of the airplane. This prompted a particularly schoolmarmish scolding from the stewardess who told him to get back in his seat immediately and stay there until we reached the terminal. Oh well, perhaps this was a little early preparation for his return to public (high) school next year, which I hope and pray will be as triumphant as was this amazing trip to—as their automobile license plates proudly proclaim—the Enchanted Isle of Puerto Rico.

WITCHCRAFT, MADNESS, AND THE FRESHMAN ENGLISH REQUIREMENT

by Bill Kaul

Bill Kaul lives and teaches in Waterflow, New Mexico. He is a frequent contributor to ΣKOΛE. I just found out that he teaches at Shiprock Alternative High School (lucky kids!), about which I suspect you'll hear more in the Winter issue—but for now, all you need to know is what a magnificent person he is, and that you can see for yourself by reading this essay.

> *'The problem of who is a fit subject for commitment would likewise disappear if we regarded involuntary mental hospitalization as a crime against humanity. The question of who was a fit subject for burning at the stake was answered only when witch-hunting was abandoned. I believe that the question of who is a fit subject for commitment will also be answered only when we abandon the practice of involuntary hospitalization.*
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> *—Thomas Szasz (1970), The Manufacture of Madness, Harper & Row, NY, p.25.*

Well said, Dr. Szasz. And I believe, coming from a viewpoint (slightly) within academia, that the question of who is a fit subject for academic failure or success will be answered only when we abandon the practice of involuntary education.

As long as it was believed that there were things called witches, it was needful for there to be a hierarchy which could control the detection, processing, and treatment of said witches. This hierarchy was the church/state of times past. Its functionaries were theological scholars, priests and princes.

Once the theory of witchcraft was replaced by a scientific theory of mental illness, it became necessary to shift the institutional control of diagnosis, processing, and treatment from the church to therapeutic science. Its functionaries are scientific scholars, judges and psychiatrists.

Szasz calls this the replacement of the Theological State with the Therapeutic State. Each assumes its own methods of classifying deviancy: religious deviants are "heretics" or "witches"; therapeutic deviants are "sick" or "insane." In each case, once the basic ontological assumptions are in force ("witches" and "insane persons," e.g.), it is a simple matter to find evidence not only for their existence but for their classification. Thus we have such handy reference books as the *Malleus Maleficarum* for the diagnosis of witchcraft, books such as the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* for the diagnosis of insanity, and the triad of tests, texts, and laboratories for the diagnosis of educability or level of education (GED, ACT, SAT, GRE, entrance/exit exams, e.g.) .

... in education, it is necessary to have specialists to determine first of all if a subject is educable at all and only then to what degree the subject is educable or has been educated. This describes the current state of research in all of these institutional regimes save perhaps the theological, where witchcraft has largely been discredited as a field of endeavor.

Please note that in the Therapeutic State (according to Szasz) a cleavage of mind and body is necessary, as in the Theological State a cleavage of soul and body is necessary. These bifurcations must exist in each case, because without them there could be no differential diagnosis, no way to say finally, "*This* one is a witch; *that* one is insane." (A sufficient diagnosis of witchcraft would be for a candidate to state, "I have no soul!" and a sufficient diagnosis of insanity is for a candidate to say "I have no mind!") It was necessary to have tests whereby one could differentiate between witchhood and some physical illness; likewise, it is necessary to have tests to differentiate between the diseases of the mind and the diseases of the body. Within each of these basic categories, of course, there arise specialists whose task it is to classify and sort incubi from succubi and neurotics from psychotics. Similarly, in education, it is necessary to have specialists to determine first of all if a subject is educable at all and only then to what degree the subject is educable or has been educated. This describes the current state of research in all of these institutional regimes save perhaps the theological, where witchcraft has largely been discredited as a field of endeavor. (Or at least it would be comforting to say that the diagnosis of witchcraft is an art whose time has passed. A quick look at fundamentalist religious literature would quickly dispel that comfortable notion. Nonetheless, it is largely discredited as a therapeutic endeavor in most circles, even religious ones.)

What grates is the lack of choice these people have in determining the course of their treatment—in fact, if they enter into institutional treatment, they usually have no choice. Similarly, we may speak of schools and teachers (professors, et al.) as being a good place for people who wish to be "educated" to turn; yet they too have little or no choice regarding their course of "treatment" once in the academic institution.

It is quite apparent that the differential diagnosis of insane/sane is still popular—that these states are demonstrable *facts* is still the ground assumption of modern scientific psychiatry. Without insane persons to treat, what would become of psychiatry? Certainly it is a good thing that people who are hurting have a place to turn. What grates is the lack of choice these people have in determining the course of their treatment—in fact, if they enter into institutional treatment, they usually have *no* choice. Similarly, we may speak of schools and teachers (professors, et al.) as being a good place for people who wish to be "educated" to turn; yet they too have little or no choice regarding their course of "treatment" once in the academic institution. (I am saying that there are social conditions which make the categories of sane/insane and educated/uneducated economically and emotionally necessary, categories into which one "falls." That is, a subject "knows" that s/he is deviant in each case, and that s/he may or may not elect treatment. There is usually coercion toward treatment in each case, even when there seems to be "choice.")

So, what of the categories of "smart" and "stupid"? What of the ground notion of the educational institutions that there are categories known as "educable" and "uneducable," "educated" and "uneducated" persons? Are these related to Szasz' categories of "sane" and "insane"?

Certainly the categories of educable/ineducable and educated/uneducated are the ground assumptions of the educational system as it's now constituted, and certainly most people know where they fall in these categories. One of the very foundations of humanism, of democracy, is the need for an educated public. To be uneducated is to be less than, not equal to. To be ineducable is to be doomed to life as little more than a clever vegetable.

To disclose these categories must be the purposes of such things as diagnostic testing, ABCDF or numerical grading, entrance/exit examinations, and the granting or withholding of a diploma or of educational credit—to separate the sheep from the goats, the smart from the stupid, to determine who is and isn't educated and what can be done about it. While a "physical examination" may be a part of this educational testing, it is used only to rule out "organic" problems which may hinder the education of the mind. In fact, we may fairly say that most of Institutional Education's testing and examination takes place upon that mysterious entity not quite physical, apparently, known as "the mind."

It would seem that, like modern scientific psychiatry, modern education presumes there are separate things called minds and bodies; one is educated aside from the other, hence "physical education" as a category apart. It is also assumed that some minds may be educated and others may not be (due to organic somatic anomalies, etc.). We may go on yet and say that there are then minds that are better-educated than others (hence, more or less prestigious diplomas or degrees from more or less prestigious schools at higher or lower levels as a mark of "education").

Please note, however, that not only is this whole house of cards built upon the assumption that there are a) separate things called "minds" and "bodies," but also upon the assumption that b) there is in fact such a thing as an "education" or an "educated person" with distinguishing characteristics that make it knowable, recognizable. (I should also point out that it requires an education to be able to make this differentiation.)

I wish to assert that there may well be no such thing as an education, at least no such thing existent *a priori* of the institutions that support it and the society which calls it into being, and that I assert this based upon the equally counterintuitive notion that there are *not* separate entities known as "minds" and "bodies." To put it another way (echoing William James) human consciousness as an entity separate from human bodies simply *does not* exist.

This is not new ground. I certainly don't wish to build a new house of cards upon the old. To merely wipe away the foundation of education—namely, that such a thing as "an education" exists—would not serve much. Obviously, even in writing this tract I assume certain marks of education myself, certain traits or hallmarks of an "educated person." (I should also disclose that I have also been diagnosed as insane—but they say I'm better now.) It would be silly of me to act as if these categories didn't exist. I'm obviously wrapped up in them. I reserve the right (humanist notion) to nonetheless *say* that these categories don't exist and presume that saying it makes it so.

So I can't just wave away "education" (even though I do). Like Szasz, however, I *would* like to make the point that if it is "a crime against humanity" to burn witches at the stake, or incarcerate the insane involuntarily, *because* there are no witches and there are no lunatics, then it is equally reprehensible to incarcerate the "uneducated" in schools so that they may become "educated." (It may be a crime against *humanism* to do away with the notion of education, but it may be in favor of *humanity*. Figure that grammar out.)

There are obviously problems with this viewpoint.

First, it is hardly accepted that there are not insane persons, not witches. It is even less accepted that there are not such entities as uneducated persons. This objection concerns me a little—acceptance of a view is a useful benchmark for its usefulness in many cases. It probably concerns me less in that this objection relies on persuasion to some degree, and I don't hope to persuade many. I rather hope that just saying it makes it so; if it's thinkable, it's sayable, and if it's sayable, it exists (or not) as a possibility (as previously noted.).

Second, we must tackle the issue of there being *acts* which, like the acts of the insane, are indicative of madness, are indicative of education. This issue is taken together with the following third issue.

The third issue is the matter of those persons who, like the insane, seek treatment, seek education. Who would seek that which doesn't exist, namely relief from insanity or relief from ignorance? (This could be dismissed by noting—as Bertrand Russell did in the case of spiritual hunger—that merely because a *desire* exists, it doesn't necessarily follow that a fulfillment of that desire exists. But I won't. Or did I just? Anyway...)

These issues may be resolved simultaneously, by taking a stand similar to that. Szasz takes in *The Manufacture of Madness;* to wit: just as there is to Szasz a difference between what he calls Contractual Psychiatry and Institutional Psychiatry, there is also a difference between what we may call Contractual Education and Institutional Education. For Szasz, the difference is this: "... whereas the institutional psychiatrist imposes himself upon his 'patients', who do not pay him, do not want to be his patients, and who are not free to reject his 'help'—the contractual psychiatrist offers himself to his patients, who must pay him, must want to be his patients, and are free to reject his help." [Szasz, xxiii]

In saying this, I acknowledge two things: first, that there *is* a potent category called an "education" abroad in our society, regardless of its permanent ontological status; and second, that there are ways that this category can be made humane without erasing it before it's possible to do so. (After all, witchcraft hasn't been erased as a useful category in many churches, even long after witch burnings have become passé. Similarly, I don't look for the demise of the entity called "an education" on the near horizon, even if schools become passé.) (I also note that it is possible for folks to willingly submit to a Contractual Exorcism.)

What interests me in this discussion is the fallout from a bifurcation within the notion of education, along the lines of Szasz' Contractual/Insti-tutional split within psychiatry.

What happens if we take the definition offered by Szasz for this split within psychiatry (regardless of the status of the mythological beast called insanity) and apply to education (regardless of the status of the mythological beast called education)? (In this exercise we may even assume there are separate entities, minds and bodies—in fact, the pursuit of this issue could even become a major part of a Contractual curriculum. It certainly won't hinder the pursuit of an Institutional curriculum. It's quite necessary for that.)

It may fairly be said that the best example of Institutional Education at work is found in the requirement of compulsory education for persons up to a certain age (if not grade level) in the pre-college student population. This may indeed be fairly said, and well said too—it's an obvious target, a place where Institutional Education has found a source of strength in law. Using compulsory education as an example of Institutional

Education (a counter-example of Contractual Education) along Szasz' lines would have us characterize Institutional Education as inhumane and have us call not only for the abolition of compulsory schooling, but also for choice of schools in a non-compulsory context. Contractual Education under those conditions would be just that, a contract entered into by the one to be educated, a contract that could be terminated at any time. The traditional objections to this—that it would deprive children of a chance at an education and force many of them into noxious work because of parental control over their choice of education—would be abrogated better by making schooling non-compulsory and instead giving children the freedom to choose their own path free of coercion; that is, to extend to children yet another blessing of humanist tradition: full civil rights. (Boy, talk about the breakdown of the nuclear family, huh?) It's also possible to speak of humane work, work that children enjoy and is in itself an education.

But, even though pre-college compulsory education is a juicy example, just ripe and waiting to be plucked (so to speak), I want to take on a less obvious example: College. To be more specific, and because one usually entails the other, I wish to use as my example of Institutional Education our friend, well-known to all of us: freshman English as a requirement for a "college education." (I will assail electives later on.)

Freshman English is a requirement. Enrollment in freshman English in its many guises (Comp 101, Rhetoric 101, Intro to Comp, etc.) is not by choice. The only way to opt out of freshman English is by satisfying the requirement in some other way (testing out, AP, etc.). Everybody must take freshman English (and usually sophomore lit, too). There's no way out. One's choice of teachers is limited, usually either by the sheer number of nameless ("Staff") sections open, or by the number of people willing to teach it. The teaching of it is usually left to functionaries on the lowest levels of Institutional Education's hierarchy. Its value to the institution, like that of the practitioner in mental health who must screen the sane from the insane, is high—it is the gateway through which all must pass. It is the locus of the initial differential diagnostic screening procedure: academic material—? or not—? (This is equally true in secondary school, by the way, where four years of English are usually required for graduation.)

Yet for all its importance, it is the place of least pay, least prestige, least perks in Institutional Education. Interns (TAs) are usually the ones who staff it in large institutional settings, not specialists.

But, even if it were recognized as the linchpin of academic gatekeeping, the triage-gateway to Institutional Education, and even if its practitioners were given the status of specialists, freshman English would still be a violation of that which is most dear to Contractual Education, namely, freedom of choice.

Those who enroll are not free to disenroll except at great penalty. Those who enroll are not free to choose their course of treatment. They are not free to decide when their treatment has been successful. They are not free to terminate their relationship with their practitioner. Nor do their practitioners get to choose who they will treat and when they will cease treatment. They cannot form into affinity groups for "treatment"—they are usually assigned to classes randomly. Often the criteria by which treatment is judged successful (ABCDF, pass/fail, etc.) are vague, just as in psychiatry. In few places are students allowed to create their own course of treatment, their own desired outcomes—and even when they are, in most cases these outcomes are institutional rather than personal. In many places, the psychiatric "panel" approach is being used—if a group of practitioners judge you "cured," then you are cured (educated). It is in this respect not unlike judging which demons are present in a witch, and judging when they have been successfully exorcised. (Think of the diagnosis of what constitutes ABCDF papers in freshman English. Are the criteria clear? If not, then what institutional machinery is brought to bear to clarify them? If there is broad agreement between diagnosticians upon what constitutes ABCDF papers, then what more does this show than that the criteria of deviancy and conformity are well internalized in the diagnosticians? It's not magic! It's like saying "Well, I know a witch when I see one!" And you *do* know, too—you may well even be able to construct a diagnostic test which will prove that the subject is a witch, within certain parameters, of course. And naturally the subject "knows" how to be a witch—they know in the same way a thermos bottle "knows" to keep coffee hot and lemonade cold.)

But if *choice* is a cornerstone of Contractual Education (and Psychiatry), and if choice is also a cornerstone of basic human(ist) rights, and if one of the purposes of education is to inculcate these democratic values into subjects, then how does Institutional Education explain coercion *into* freshman English as a widespread practice, and coercion *within* freshman English as being an acceptable state of affairs?

The usual response is the same as that of the Institutional Psychiatrists to involuntary commitment: "It's good for them." "It *will equip them to function fully in society."*

Hm. Sounds fishy to me... but then, I'm crazy. (I've heard it before: "It's OK, Bill. Go ahead. It won't hurt.")

Then there is also the matter of who's paying to be considered in this freshman English example. One of the criteria of Contractual Education (following Szasz) is that the subject pays for the education. This requirement would seen to be met in the example of freshman English (or college in general). Certainly *somebody* is paying, but who? Usually not the student, or the student only in a very indirect manner—through parents, loans, grants, etc. But even if the student is paying for his courses in freshman English (sticking to our example), say by working a night job, the real test is this: can the student actually *withhold* pay from his practitioner? I'd like to see it: "Sorry, English TA, but I won't pay you for today's class. I didn't learn anything." Can't happen, and mainly for two reasons: 1) the *institution* pays the practitioner, not the client, and 2) there would be no way for the student to claim that no knowledge was gained; they haven't by definition got that ability. (It's the job of the institution, not the student, to say that the criteria for "education" have been met... imagine a psychiatric inmate saying "So long, doc! I'm cured!"—that would just be further evidence that they are crazy. Similarly, a student who says "So long, teach! I'm educated!" is just giving further testimony of his ignorance.)

But that's enough for freshman English. What of electives beyond sophomore literature? What of, e.g., "You can take either ENG 302 and ENG 303, *or* ENG 311 and ENG 312, and any from the following list: ENG 400, ENG 423, ENG 456..." You know, the requirements for a major checklist. Is this choice? Is there a payoff here for the deferment of choice in the "core curriculum"? No such luck. First, there are the problems of pay and termination of services. There is no change here from freshman English. Students cannot withhold pay or decide when their "treatment" is complete. Nor may they choose their practitioner—at this level of treatment, there are specialists for each case. It's more a case of "choose your disease from among these possibilities" or "you have a choice between three drugs with which you must be treated before you may be released." And there can be no argument at these institutional levels of diagnosis—students are *now* dealing with *experts*.

Oh, there are nods at choice here, to be sure: It is because Institutional Education is a humanist enterprise that it must contain the vestiges of free choice, but this shouldn't be confused with real choice; that is, the choice to define education for oneself.

We may speak here also of expectations from society. Certainly society *expects* certain behaviors and skills from both educated and sane persons, and persons failing to exhibit these behaviors and skills cannot be considered as educated or sane (or by other criteria in other days, free from demons). Thus it behooves the institutions charged with certifying sanity or education to be as certain as possible that their alumni exhibit these characteristics. (Hence the emphasis on composition and literature, probably—hallmarks of education.) But is this an excuse for the abrogation of liberty, or an excuse for failing to re-vision society? Is it truly "good for us" in the long run to continue this institutionalization of education (or psychiatry)? Both are, after all, therapeutic enterprises. (There are certainly stigmata attached to ignorance and insanity—Szasz contributes a chapter in *The Manufacture of Madness* called "The Manufacture of Medical Stigmata." He reaches the same conclusion I do—these stigmata are not natural kinds. They are "manufactured," and are controlled. They are open to revision, as the diagnosis of witchcraft was.)

Obviously, the view (taken from Szasz, again) that education must, or should, be Contractual in order to be humane (the humanist attraction again), calls for no less than a revisioning of society. It may be that the humanist ideal of "contract" or "choice" is not the issue at all—it may be that a whole new kind of person requiring a whole new kind of ideological foundation is a-borning. Perhaps this foundation will be more dynamic, reflecting the lack of any absolute ground for *any* diagnosis.

I dunno—but at the very least the work of Szasz opens up some very interesting binds in the whole foundation of

Institutional Education.

For example, in addition to the things brought out above in the previous examples, what would a Contractual Education look like in a social gestalt? Would it become by turn a new Institutional Education in time? Could it be any other than a new Institution at any time? When and where, then, does a vision such as that of a Contractual Education come into existence? Or is it merely that dynamo, that vision itself, that keeps institutional foundations in flux?

There are other considerations as well. Consider that the transfer of Szasz' framework from his continuum of the Theological State—Therapeutic State *already* includes in its continuum the Educational State. The only thing that changed across this continuum is what the education was in, and for. Was it for detecting witches, or for diagnosing insanity? In either case, the education required for entry into the power élite of the state institution was itself institutional.

So the issue of education may actually be the foundation of the foundation of the western passion for diagnosis and treatment and progress toward an ideal. Ugh. Maybe I'll write a book. In the meantime, this may or may not be a discussion starter, grist for the Institutional Educationists' mills.

This last may raise the most personally pertinent issue of this whole exercise for me: what becomes of the Institutional Educator who questions the foundations of Institutional Education? Something like what happens to a shrink (and a lowly staff doctor at that) who questions—while standing in the admitting ward of an insane asylum—whether there is such a thing as insanity? A job change, I suppose. I certainly couldn't *act* upon my assertion that Contractual Education is desirable. Or could I act, at a cost? And if I could act at a cost, then who, pray tell, would I be paying? And for how long? Maybe there's yet another foundation to assail... OK, who's in charge here, goddammit?

"I always say—half joking, because I am serious about it—that the only honest people left on this earth are psychotics, young children and dying patients ..."
—*Elisabeth Kubler-Ross,* Death is of Vital Importance; On Life, Death and After Death, *Station Hill Press, 1995.*

And here's another contribution from Bill. Perhaps it could be called a sermon ... I don't know—all I can tell you is that when I finished it, I was in tears, and so were the rest of us when I read it to them!

HELPLESS RAGE/HOPELESS LOVE

by Bill Kaul

We live in scary times. People run to, and fro, trying to find peace of mind, protection, of property, freedom from want, approval, and who knows what else. Everybody's looking; for something. Desiring something. Trying to fill the empty holes. Scary.

Like not being willing to teach—or even mention—contraception to a group of teen moms enrolled in an alternative school. Scary.

Like that feeling of oppression that comes over me when I am being told to suppress the truth, to not tell students how I really feel about something. Where lying and pretending to be other than what I am is the ticket to success. The more plastic you are, the more proper you are. Don't ask, don't tell. Scary.

I saw a child yesterday. He was in trouble. He was being made to face the wall for his infraction of the rules—his sin was talking, I believe. There's nothing profound here, I guess, but when I saw him, and he kind of glanced at me from under his arm when I patted him on the back quickly (so the teacher wouldn't notice and say that I was "undermining her authority")—the look on his face. I have been trying to capture that feeling his look gave me. I can't. Scary. Like the look of a little girl whose hand is slapped away by her father as they are crossing the street. She just wanted to hold his hand. The look on a little boy's face when he realizes I'm not going to hit him for spilling his milk. The look a stray dog gives you when it realizes you're going to feed him, not beat him. These looks do something to my guts. I don't know what to call it. I don't know what to call it, but I think it has something to do with love and compassion, something to do with the very heart of being a teacher or a learner.

And it seems to be missing in the hearts of many. An emptiness. Empty like the halls of a school during classes, at the sound of a bell, to be filled with screaming desire.

I'm afraid for us. I would prefer to be driven by love and compassion, but I live in a world driven by emptiness and fear. Mostly.

Sometimes, every so often, when I'm not worried about how I'm going to pay my bills, I just reach out to another and that thing happens. What is it? Electricity? Some sort of connection through the spiritual ether? I don't know, but it fills the emptiness like no drug, no applause, no success can ever do.

While we argue over dividing up money and success, land and honors, turf and profits, we overlook those resources most essential: love, hope, compassion, honesty. Totally renewable resources. "We belong to the earth; the earth does not belong to us." What if? What if we all lived as if that rather non-Christian sentiment was our world view? What would our society look like? If that axiom is true, and we ignore it, what is the cost to us as a species?

I'm just wondering now, no thesis, no particular argument, my revolutionary fervor is diminished by a real desire to connect with simple truths.

I met a man from Taos Pueblo, in Durango, Colorado. I was walking down the street, sort of carefree, taking in the bustle of New Age-Old Age, and he stumbled out of a bar. He looked at me and said, "Heyyyy, brother!" and I knew right away. "Hello to you," I said, and we ended up smoking cigarettes and eating crackers from my backpack, and he told me before we parted, "Stay close to Mother Earth, bro." Just like that. "Stay close to Mother Earth." And then, "I mean it, bro. Stay close. It's the only thing. I'm saying this for you." And then he wandered on, to "look for some yellowhairs, " he said.

Seemed like good advice.

I pass it on to you: Stay close to Mother Earth. Tell the children, too, and say I love you to them. This is the pedagogy of the oppressed: I want everything for you that I want for myself. And the methodology—? It is to ask: What do I want? What do you want? Is there a desire that, being quenched, would extinguish all other desire? Is it a thirst for God? A longing for Mother Earth? To know, as surely as you know your body, that you are loved?

What, indeed, do we want?

It's scary to look at government. What do we want?
It's scary to look at schools. What do we want?
Those glances from the children: my guts are twisted with fear, and love, and compassion.

Well, anyway, this is a bit different for me. I usually react with anger and in-your-face criticism to what I perceive as injustice and foolish pride.

Lately, though, I have been recognizing that the stool upon which I sit is no throne of judgment, that my intolerance is no better than anyone else's, and that humility and character building are sufficient exercises unto themselves. As a result I am once again a complex human being, and now, having exhausted the inner, I find that reaching out in love is the only way I can heal.

As a friend of mine once said, "True ambition is not what we thought it was. True ambition is the profound desire to live usefully and walk humbly under the grace of God."

Best wishes and heathen blessings,
Bill
Waterflow, NM

Oh, Bill, amen and amen, brother!

> ***... from where I stand government is far and away the most compelling threat because its incursions are written into statutes, protocols, licensing, taxes, police powers and permanent bureaucracies like schools which grow and grow. Mob passion is always a transient phenomenon, and mobs are sometimes ashamed of themselves afterwards, but governments never. How could they be? Shame is a human emotion and governments are abstractions run amok.***
> ***—John Taylor Gatto,*** *"Radical Democracy and Our Future: A Call to Action,"* Keynote Address: *Pitkin Conference, Goddard College, July, 1995. From* The Journal of Family Life **II (Fall, 1995).**

Robert Kastelic writes that he is a former professor of Education at Pacific University in Oregon. He taught high school social studies for eighteen years in Scottsdale, Arizona. He holds his Doctorate from Columbia University's Teachers College in New York. He received his Masters degree from Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona. He is also Institute certified in Reality Therapy and Control Theory.

His professional experiences also include supervision and professional preparation of teachers in New York, Arizona, and Oregon. He is presently the Director of Research and Development for Southwest Research and Educational Services, Inc., which is a non-profit educational group. Presently he also serves on the Board of Directors for Southwest Research and Educational Services, Inc. and The Joyful Child Foundation.

He is married to Lucy, who is a public school elementary educator, Montessori certified, and Reality Therapy and Control Theory certified. Together they have two school-aged sons.

TAKE A HIKE; LESSONS IN SELF RELIANCE AND PARENTAL PATH FINDING

by Robert L. Kastelic, Ed.D.

Each summer over the past eight years we have provided an opportunity for a personal and unique adventure for our sons. We have spent the summer in the White River National Forest in Colorado taking care of a Forest Service campground. My wife and I are educators and have the summer break to provide extended educational opportunities for our sons, as well as to get a chance to recharge and relax. For each of us working in the forest during the summer has meant several different things. However, for our children it has meant more than merely being with nature. Over the years they have been provided the opportunity to learn some basic skills in self reliance. Self reliance figures big in this short story because I perceive that many young people are being deprived the opportunities of learning for themselves the value and importance of self reliance except through negative or traumatic experiences. Unfortunately, too many children are learning to take care of themselves because of being abandoned either emotionally, physically, or both.

Each summer we would pack up our travel trailer and head for the Colorado mountains. This kind of vacation was done in an effort of sanity as well as enjoyment. We live in the Sonoran desert and temperatures in the desert were reaching 110 degrees in early May. Our destination in the mountains, on the other hand, was hovering in the mid 60s to 70s degree temperatures. We came upon the campground host situation by simply writing a variety of government offices that dealt with camp services. The opportunity presented a wonderful classroom for us and our children.

Our summer site was located in a glacier valley at about 8 thousand feet altitude. Each year it would take awhile to acclimate to the altitude. But that did not mean that we could take it too easy. You see, there were no hookups of modern convenience at our site. This meant that we were responsible for getting all of our water, electric, and sewer needs. Our water was supplied by a nearby well that had a water pump which provided fresh glacier melt water. Our electricity was provided by a series of 12 volt batteries connected to a solar panel setup that I installed on the roof of our trailer. And, our sewer needs were met with periodic runs to a nearby Forest Service outhouse and a portable sewer dolly. Propane served our cooking and heating needs. All of these concerns required a good deal of maintenance time and had to be done. If you didn't follow through with daily chores, then you simply went without. No one was there to fill in the gaps for us. There was no telephone available to us so we couldn't phone in for a special delivery. While it appeared as somewhat primitive, things never really got desperate. Over the years the boys perceived these tasks as jobs that merely had to be done, and they were expected to participate. At first, working the hand pump at the well was fun; however, as the summer wore on, it became work and a task that might easily be replaced with fishing. The boys also saw at first hand the value of conservation of resources. The more water they used, the more work there was the following day. So, for instance, it was silly to leave the water running while you brushed your teeth. Lights were not needlessly left on. The heat was turned off as soon as it was no longer necessary. Other considerations were made too as a real live connection was made between the product being used and the process to obtain it. Sometimes our comfort zones were really challenged.

There was one year that was especially revealing to us as parents. That was the year that we perceived the boys were gaining a personal understanding of the value of self reliance. Our oldest son Ben was 10 and Nathaniel was 7 years old. They had already spent many years in the area. Nathaniel had spent all of his summers in the forest. The boys had just completed listening to the rather long and detailed story, *The Swiss Family Robinson* . It had taken about four consecutive nights, and their attention was glued to the story. Now, parents need to consider that there is a lot of killing of things in the story, so we were a bit concerned that the boys might find it to be repulsive. On the other hand, the killing was done mainly for survival. Yet we did point out to them that some of the animal killing seemed to be glorified, which they agreed was unnecessary. A couple of days following the conclusion of the story, the boys were engaged in making lists, drawing maps and collecting equipment, in earnest'. We didn't find this to be too unusual as they were always creating adventures for themselves. However, this adventure was going to be different, as we soon found out. They presented us with their "plan," which was to go on an overnight backpack trek up the mountain to the next campground area. They intended to do this trek alone. They were prepared to hike up there and spend the night alone at about 10 thousand feet altitude! Funny enough, they thought this was perfectly normal and no big deal. Of course, we, thinking of ourselves as responsible parents found this to be a bit much for two young children. It was a lot....

But then we began to think. Why were we spending the time with them in the forest in the first place? What did we really want them to learn? Weren't they saying that they were comfortable enough with the natural world and confident enough in themselves to hike up the mountain, set up camp, get their firewood, cook their meals, get their sleeping bags out and take care of each other? Wasn't this what we really wanted for them? Sure it was, we said to each other. We just thought it would be nice for them to do when they were 18 . After talking it over with each other and with the boys, we concluded that it would be all right to take the adventure. We considered that the conditions were safe. There was a Forest Service Ranger and another campground host staying in a nearby camp area, should any problems arise. The boys agreed on the conditions we set down and gave each other the high five slap of approval when we finally agreed on a plan. After making an extensive list of gear and camp needs, they proceeded to pack and plan activities. They considered the things they would take much in the same way that we would. Actually, it was much in the same way that we did every time we packed the trailer or daypacks for hikes. A food list was generated giving consideration to cooking skills and limitations.

On the day of departure the boys stated that they wanted to get an early start. We agreed .The distance of the hike was about 6 miles and the altitude change was about 1 thousand feet .The trail was one that we had hiked on a few times before as a family. The trail wrapped its way through a wide canyon of aspen trees and beautiful, colorful meadows. The weather was perfect. It was a crisp, sunny and dry morning. The weather report we got was that it would remain that way for the next few days.

It was difficult to watch them hike off together. They turned a few times waving and shouting for us not to worry. It was difficult to watch them and wonder if we had covered everything with them. It would be even more difficult as the daylight turned to dark. The often heard, "take a hike," was taking on a whole new meaning.

While we knew we had to trust all of the years of our work with them it was extremely hard not to get in the car and drive up to check in on them. We stayed up late that night; real late. We wondered how things were going with them and we plotted simple plans of how we might go up and check on them.

It gets really dark in the mountains at night. With no city lights to create an overglow, the sky comes alive with a sea of stars. But it is still pretty dark in the forest. We thought about how dark it was for the boys. They had a variety of tasks which had to be completed before they went to sleep that night On entering camp, they had to collect fire wood, get the water they would need from a nearby water pump, set their tent in order, cook their meal, and clean up after dinner. The following morning they would have a similar set of tasks. Of course, we knew that they would also spend some time fishing and exploring around the area. While we knew we had to trust all of the years of our work with them it was extremely hard not to get in the car and drive up to check in on them. We stayed up late that night; real late. We wondered how things were going with them and we plotted simple plans of how we might go up and check on them. All of these plans were followed by the fact that they would never know that we were there. You know, the way parents slip into their children's bedroom at night to check on them? The pulling up of their covers and firming the pillow or blanket around them seem to be an act of correct parenting. And not waking the child is a sign of an expert status at the task. But either mental exhaustion or common sense prohibited us from checking on them. While at the time it was difficult I am sure glad we refrained. What we all learned might have been lost had we gone up to the camp.

The following day we had arranged to drive up in the afternoon to meet them at their camp We were met by two proud, confident, and eager looking young campers. While they were glad to see us they weren't exactly desperate to see us. They were enjoying themselves and had just returned from a fishing trip to a nearby glacier lake about 500 yards away from camp. They told us all about their hike up the previous day and how they got a bit lost on the trail but waited for a horseback trip that they knew was coming through to the same area as they were heading. Pulling in behind the pack horses they finished the hike in good time and considered their problem solving process to be pretty clever. They had prepared and eaten all their meals without any difficulty and had spent a good deal of the night playing card games and telling stories in the tent.

These sorts of learning opportunities do not exist in most schools. Instead, hours of doing rather mundane tasks and sitting in seats lined up in rows, or some other sort of formation provide for a rather pathetic means for teaching lifelong learning skills.

What they had an opportunity to learn from the trek and from us not going up there was an increase in self reliance.

They could test and rely on their own skills and not those of adults. The concept of cooperative learning would have an opportũnity to manifest its value rather than just be an idea that adults had for kids. The trek provided for a situation whereby two brothers would have a positive and memorable experience with nature. These sorts of learning opportunities do not exist in most schools. Instead, hours of doing rather mundane tasks and sitting in seats lined up in rows, or some other sort of formation provide for a rather pathetic means for teaching lifelong learning skills. Schools tend to spend a lot of time and energy working on the academically *e*ffective skills— and *a*ffective concerns are all too often left by the wayside. We believe that experiences such as this trek and other similar projects does more for their self-esteem than any grade or reward in school has done. Among the challenge and work I believe they also continued to find a personal value and appreciation of the beauty and awe of the natural world.

What we learned as parents was in many ways similar to what the boys were learning. "Parental self reliance" might describe the learned lesson. Do we advise this sort of experience for all kids or parents? Well, first consider that I mentioned we had spent a good deal of time in the forest area with the boys learning together and working in self-reliance situations. We see this as a key to a positive experience. However, not all kids are up to this sort of thing, just as all parents aren't up to it. Maybe there are other "experience paths" you could explore with your child. You could build up to the solo trek level with preliminary hikes. The point here is to investigate the opportunities for building self-reliance skills and then listen to what your child indicates that they are ready for. Consider too that we did not approve of this trek without taking the following points into consideration:

a. the boys had spent many years in the area;

b. they were both familiar with the terrain, the trail and the destination point;

c. we talked through "what if" scenarios with them, checking them for clarity of their understandings of the situation;

d. they knew that there were reliable adults in their camp area if they encountered a problem;

e. they had watched their parents model problem-solving and self-reliance techniques in the forest over the years;

f. they were willing and able to list, prepare, and pack the equipment that they would need.

It's difficult to consider what is responsible parenting given the fears one may have of things that might happen or go wrong.

Of course, sensible and appropriate judgment may find you overruling your child's plans at times. A child may not be old enough or experienced for what they are wanting to do. However, there is also the case of a parent being overheard telling the child not to go near the water until they knew how to swim. As silly as it sounds, we all too often may find ourselves making similar remarks. Yet experience in decision-making and in being responsible makes for an experienced and responsible decision maker, whether it's a child or an adult. It's difficult to consider what is responsible parenting given the fears one may have of things that might happen or go wrong. Thanks to projections and oversensationalism by the media, many parents have been trained in the fear of things which might go wrong. Many parents have unfortunately received their parental training through the eyes of a television program. As parents, many of us spend a good deal of time wondering if we have done everything correctly. Through the "Monday morning quarterback" process, we could probably find a number of ways to have done some parenting task differently. Some parents work at presenting their children with nothing but successful options and thereby hoping to avoid any chance of failure and maybe even challenge. Some wonder if their kids know everything they will need to know. We wonder if they will act in a responsible fashion and make appropriate decisions. However, sometimes it may simply be best to trust your work and rely less on fears. Fear is the greatest obstacle to learning whether you're a child or an adult.

It is in fact nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry.

—Albert Einstein

Note: Ron Dultz sent us an article on education which we published in the Winter, 1994, issue of ΣΚΟΛΕ. Ron writes that he would like to receive your comments about this essay: Ron Dultz; P.O. Box 370985; Reseda, CA 91337. His book-length collection of 22 essays, entitled Educating the Entire Person, *brings many new insights into the arena of educational theory, and helps clear a path along which students may travel in their quest for true success in their learning. It can be purchased by sending $10 along with your return address to Ron Dultz.*

WHAT SHOULD BE THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER OF CHILDREN?

by Ron Dultz

While adults have specific reasons for attending school, and do so voluntarily; children attend school at the request of their elders, and often under pressure to do so. While adults may at any time quit a school, or a particular class or learning program within a school they attend, children usually may not. Clearly, children are placed in a school, and expected to participate in the programs of a school, without their consent. Their wishes are not consulted, nor is a prloper investigation made of their learning or developmental needs, before beginning to teach them. They are herded through programs at the behest of educators, and at the convenience of educators. Little, if any, attempt is made to determine the effects of this blatant manipulation.

Adults have long assumed it is their moral duty to manipulate and mold children insofar as their education is concerned because they worry that if they do not establish a direction for children by steering them and nudging them, cajoling them and pressuring them—thus controlling their lives as students, children will not develop properly. Adults, on the whole, have willingly transferred responsibility for this objective onto professional educators, who oversee their children's education in the aforesaid authoritarian manner.

The fact that children are vulnerable, pliable and usually unquestioning of the authority of their elders does not entitle professional educators to impose learning upon them. Professional educators may assume they have the right to impose learning upon children to insure that they become properly educated, and parents may believe educators should have this right; but, in reality, no one has the right to demand learning of children. It is a gross violation of their civil rights.

Making children learn is as inappropriate as making your friend go for a walk, or making your friend climb a tree, or making your friend cut your front lawn. All people, of all ages, respond extremely poorly to being forced to do things. It is not in human nature to be forced, manipulated or controlled. It is contrary to every decent concept of democracy and of freedom. The moment you force someone to do something, you assume the role of dictator. The role of dictator may be required in emergencies and to insure children's safety, but it should not be used as a method of teaching children.

Since most children are not asking for formal education, but are simply obliging their elders by going to school, it is extremely important for parents to make sure educators are not imposing or dictatorial hosts while their children are in their care. If educators impose upon children in unfair ways, thereby generating hostility and resentment in children, it would not be surprising if children held their parents to be partly responsible because they are attending school to please them. This hostility and resentment toward their parents may be of an unconscious variety, but real nonetheless.

The most important idea to keep in mind when educating children is the fact that *all children are immersed in sensitive, complex and critical patterns of self-development*. Their formal education cannot occur properly if it is inharmonious with their various patterns of self-development. Consequently, the primary role of the teacher of children must be that of fitting what he has to offer into the self-development of children. The only way this can be accomplished is for the education of children to cease being an educator-centered process, and to begin being a student-centered process.

But today, most public and private schools for the education of children are educator-centered. The programs, devices, concoctions, and whims of educators are central and all-important. Little effort is made to determine the degree to which chldren need, want or can properly participate in what educators force upon them. In today's scheme of educating children, the educator is a dictator and children are his unhappy pawns. Gains that are made in acquiring information under this scheme are often losses with respect to the personal identity and overall development of the individual student.

To reverse this process, and begin to establish a solid foundation for the education of children, reasonable minds must prevail. The old ways of doing things must be discarded. Cnly those who have the courage to begin anew, with new concepts and new methods should step forward to reform and rebuild our institutions for educating our children.

I believe the new instructor of children must first determine if the students in his charge require, or can use, his services.

Secondly, the instructor must nurture in the students a willingness or desire to be taught by him. In other words, the new teacher of children must first justify his teaching. And that is because his students likely have not elected to learn from him. They are simply obliging their parents by being in school.

A period of initial adjustment to this unnatural situation must preceed the instruction of children. This period of initial adjustment will address the civil rights of the students, and the professional rights of the teacher.

The civil rights of children are centered in their right to refuse being manipulated, even for so noble a purpose as education. We all know that an employer has a right to manipulate his employees within certain parameters in order to get the job done that he is paying them to do. But our society has erred in assuming that educators have a mandate, or a right, to demand learning of children in their charge.

A thoughtful analysis of this issue will reveal that demanding learning of children is inappropriate in a majority of cases. It humiliates children, frightens them, intimidates them, disorients them, and often establishes in them resentment and hostility toward learning.

Demanding learning of children is also an unfair assignment for teachers. Teachers placed in the position of having to demand learning from children are themselves given an ignoble task. It can be humiliating, unrewarding and demoralizing.

In conclusion, the entire foundational theory upon which the teaching of children has been established must be thoroughly reexamined. Much of it is destructive of the aims of a free and healthy society. Much of it is clearly undemocratic.

If demanding learning of children violates their civil rights and is unfair to teachers, what should be the precise role of the teacher of children?

I suggest that the role of the teacher of children should be limited to that of a facilitator who is not permitted to demand learning of his students. He can suggest learning, encourage learning, and make it possible for learning to occur. He is then a gatherer of educational resources and materials, a provider of an educational environment, and a personal source of inspiration, support and encouragement for his students.

If a teacher of children is not permitted to demand learning of his students, his students need not participate in his programs, offerings or suggestions. This sends an important signal to the teacher. It tells the teacher that he must win his students over by genuine teaching skills, and by genuine human qualities. If he is to develop a proper teacher-student relationship, he must learn how to properly addresss the learning and developmental needs of his students, and he must have personal qualities which his students find appealing. The students themselves will determine if he is a successful instructor by their voluntary responses to him, and to his teaching efforts.

A school which wholeheartedly advocates, and practices, voluntary learning for children in all instances, and at all times, sends an important signal to those who design and mandate learning curricula. It would appear at the outset that their specialized services are not needed. But perhaps this is not entirely the case. Certainly, if all schools for children were places of voluntary learning, there would no longer be any mandated learning curricula; but perhaps there could still exist specialists who design learning curricula. Their work as curriculum designers would then require different research than is commonly used for such a purpose, and much more personal involvement with the lives and needs of children. The new brand of curriculum designers would likely have to do a good deal of on-site field work to see how well their *suggested* curricula is being used, and to see if it is being used at all. Their success as curriculum designers would be predicated upon the frequency with which their *suggested* programs, projects and Schools, teachers, curriculum designers and educational administrators may wish to straddle the fence *between* methods of instruction which favor mandatory learning for children and those which favor voluntary learning for children. In other

When educators teach children that the love of learning is an insufficient motivation for learning by pressuring them and cajoling them to learn what they (the educators) have predetermined is best for them to learn, educators destroy in children the inclination to develop both a love of learning and a love of knowledge at the very beginning of their lives, which is when they most need to acquire them.

words, they may advocate and practice a mixture of the two educational methods simultaneously. With regards to instructing children, I suggest that this is like trying to mix oil with water.

Children need and deserve a learning atmosphere, or environment, devoid of the tyranny of curriculum enforcment. Educators need to show children what they know to be true: that something as invigorating, inspiring and useful as learning need not be required or enforced. By teaching children a love of learning using genuine teaching skills and genuine human qualities, and by gently fostering—within a resource-rich educational environment—the dynamic impulse to learn which resides in embryonic form in every child, children can be stimulated and encouraged to attempt voluntary learning of all types and varieties. They will then automatically regard learning as their lifelong helpmate and benefactor, and willingly immerse themselves in it.

When educators teach children that the love of learning is an insufficient motivation for learning by pressuring them and cajoling them to learn what they (the educators) have predetermined is best for them to learn, educators destroy in children the inclination to develop both a love of learning and a love of knowledge at the very beginning of their lives, which is when they most need to acquire them. On the other hand, if the concept of voluntary learning for children is properly researched and implemented, it will restore a love of learning and a love of knowledge to the lives of all children, and stimulate and invigorate the learning process in unforseen and glorious ways.

Compulsory education for children has been tried for such a long time, and has so often failed the teachers and the children, or produced mixed or uncertain results, that it is now time to try voluntary learning for children in its most undiluted form. Although the idea of voluntary learning for children in a completely undiluted form might seem extreme, it is actually a very basic and logical approach to educating children. In the beginning, *pilot programs* should be tried, but only in an undiluted form. No admixture of compulsory, required or mandated exercises or programs should accompany them, infiltrate them or be interwoven into them. This is the only way in which this method properly instituted, and properly evaluated by teachers, students, curriculum designers and educational administrators.

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TEN PRINCIPLES OF HOLISTIC EDUCATION

by Nathaniel Needle

Here's the bio Nat sent with his article:

Nat works with about 15 teenagers at Clonlara School, best known for its Home-Based Education Program. Students (including Nat too) are free to use their time in their own way. We have younger kids too, with whom we can hang out as much as we want. It is not perfect, but we keep tinkering with it together.

In July, Nat was ordained as a Dharma Teacher (sort of a Buddhist lay minister). Eight days later, his first child, Asa, a boy, was born, thanks to his wife Mihoko Wakabayashi, who works with Japanese home-schoólers and "school refusal" students.

Introduction:

These principles summarize the basis for my educational practice as it has evolved over the past 20 years, working with young people and adults in a variety of situations: Public school, alternative school, graduate school, youth theater, summer camp, Buddhist religious education. With the recent birth of my first child, I'm starting home education too!

All the opinions herein are open to ongoing revision based on reflection and experience.

This is not a blueprint for a particular educational enterprise. I encourage parents, teachers, and students to use these principles as guidelines for experimentation: what kinds of educational arrangements are best suited to putting these principles into action in your specific circumstances? I hope they can provide a touchstone for educators who are not in a position to stray very far from cultural norms as well as for those who are looking to create intentional communities which embody holistic ideals from the start.

I use the term "ecological" in this article to express how different aspects of life mutually reinforce each other to create a self-sustaining system. For example, the educational plan that requires students to be in one building all day, some distance from home, goes hand-in-hand with the economic plan which requires parents to do likewise. Ecological awareness includes not only our natural planetary ecology, but also our social ecology which affects and is affected by it. It means spotting mutually reinforcing connections already in place, and setting new ones in motion.

The term "holistic" refers to a way of seeing the self, others, society, and nature as an interrelated web. Within this web, no one is separate from other human beings and their suffering, nor from our planet and the natural forces which sustain life. At the same time, each person is, uniquely and preciously, a whole expression of the entire web.

A holistic view encourages awareness of the social, emotional, natural, historical, and other contexts within which experience occurs. Although these contexts shape us, we can also act upon them. For example, a holistic view of education pays as much attention to transforming the context of human relationships within which learning takes place as to the subject-matter itself.

These principles describe a spiritual context for learning which does not recommend any fixed "curriculum": courses, classes, tests, or subject requirements. Within this context, learning content and methods may vary according to individual and community wishes.

What remains constant is faith that each person can contribute in some way to the liberation of society from greed, anger and ignorance. The purpose of holistic education is to allow each person to develop profound self-knowledge, and, through it, the skill required to cooperate with others towards social transformation. Teachers and students pursue the various disciplines with an awareness of this larger context.

Holistic education addresses our essential function as awakening human beings. It is an alternative to education which sees people as isolated competitors striving to achieve personal material security and status within a "global market".

I don't think holistic educators need a master plan for the process or the results of personal and social development on a large or long-term scale (master plans tend to encourage masters who plan them). I think it's wiser to have confidence that as people expand their awareness of internal and external realities, and abandon their attachment to ego, that they will evolve social forms which befit their capacities. These forms in turn will encourage further awakening among individuals, and so on in an ecological "feedback loop".

Within such a vision, great meaning adheres to our cultivation of mindfulness in small ways: being kind, making friends out of enemies, conserving material resources, and so on. Without such foundation stones, social change efforts risk becoming the same old wine in a new bottle.

1. Learning Wisdom and Compassion is the Context for Learning Everything Else.

Wisdom and compassion are the reflective and emotional aspects, respectively, of our liberation from the bonds of egocentrism. Only as people become wise and compassionate can we have peace on earth. Sheer obedience, whether to authority or to the promptings of ego, is no substitute for exercising one's own wisdom eye and compassionate heart. Nor are technical skill, artistic talent, or athletic prowess, as useful or pleasant as these might be.

Any learning activity has two aspects. There is a contextual aspect involving choice, effort, patience, interest, overcoming fear, and the nature of the teaching-learning relationship. Wisdom and compassion on the part of both teacher and student are exercised precisely when working skillfully and mutually with this context.

There is also the content itself, which should engage the student in a direct experience of expanding his or her awareness and capacities. As these increase, so do the complexity and richness of our interactions with and contributions to others. These in turn multiply opportunities for the exercise of wisdom and compassion on a wider scale. For example, a young person making decisions about the bookstore is helped by skill at math and knowledge of books. Someone who is familiar with the history of World War II, and the varying viewpoints surrounding its final days, can contribute more to a wise and compassionate commemoration of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

2. Young and Old Can Learn Wisdom and Compassion

Often we assume that wisdom and compassion are faculties that come magically with age if at all. We rarely explore what can be done to develop wisdom and compassion in young people, within the natural context of a social group. Skills and knowledge are divorced from situations which would exercise the capacity for wisdom and compassion. Instead we rely upon obedience to authority figures and a set of rules to keep behavior in line with values.

Perhaps the most important source of wisdom and compassion is prolonged engagement with adults and young people who take these values to heart and strive to live by them. Here is a partial list of other gateways: voluntarily sharing in common tasks making choices without coercion by others evaluating the results of one's choices without being dominated by fear being treated with respect and love doing helpful things and having them appreciated having opportunities to exercise leadership and judgment on important matters participating in a democratic process listening to people of varied views, backgrounds, and personalities any sincere spiritual practice such as meditation.

We also need to hang on to a wise sense of humor, so that we aren't hovering over every action, assessing it for its purity.

How we develop wisdom and compassion is, I think, an experimental matter. Faith that it can be developed, and that it can be distinguished from mere conformity or cleverness, is what this principle is about. May experiments flourish!

3. We Exist in an Ecological Web

Here's a sample list of questions:

Where does our food come from?
What is the daily experience of those who grew or prepared the food for us to eat?
How does what we eat affect ourselves and others?
How do we organize ourselves for production and consumption? What kinds of people are around to influence us?
How do we relate to nature?
How do we treat animals in different cultures?
How does what we possess influence what others possess?
How much and what kind of waste do we produce?
Where does it go?
Who makes decisions that affect us and how are the decisions made?
What are the relations of equality, authority and submission in the workplace and the family?

How did we adapt to what our parents told us when we were small?
How do people of different ages learn from each other?
What are our most pressing desires?
What do we think we must do to be happy?

The most important factors influencing our characters and our learning are the easiest to take for granted. Some of these are natural forces (e.g., the needs of our own bodies) to which we can adapt more intelligently. Others are cultural forces which determine how we interact with each other and with nature, and how we perceive ourselves.

If we are determined to learn and grow, we need to have a society which contributes to learning and growth. Therefore we take, as our starting point for education, critical inquiry, practical experimentation, and social activism regarding the web we live in. The ecological awareness-context in which we work frames the motivating question for our educational activity: how do things as they stand affect our growth, the growth of our brothers and sisters all over the planet, and a healthy, sustainable planetary ecology?

Inquiry should come out of each person's capacity for reason and feeling. Experiments must respect each person or group's desire for action. A friendly ecological curiosity is important, not some imposed dogma about method or any preordained set of solutions. There is room for every kind of sincere effort. The danger in articulating and prescribing this kind of overarching purpose for education is that it will encourage Puritanism, humorlessness, and teaching based on indoctrination rather than shared experience. Ecological awareness is about opening ourselves up, not closing ourselves down. No set of concepts or beliefs can substitute for wisdom and compassion as a check on our tendency towards egocentrism in all its various forms, including thinking we are always right.

Learning is influenced by psychobiological forces as well as larger socioeconomic and natural forces. How aware we are of these forces influences our growth as well. Finally, our attitude towards them is also important: do we see them as aspects of our world which are subject to the scrutiny and regulation of a wise eye and a compassionate heart? Or do we try to navigate a "safe zone" in which our cravings and attachments, and their cumulative effect upon our society and our planet, are considered none of our educational business?

4. Growth is an Ecological Process

On a trip last spring to the Utah desert, a friend explained to me about efforts to slow erosion and desertification by developing pockets of life. Desert plants were introduced which needed little in the way of soil to grow. As these decomposed, patches of fragile "cryptobiotic" soil, only slightly different from the surrounding sand, began to form. Posted signs and local residents implored tourists not to step on this delicate crust. The cryptobiotic soil, in turn, will gradually be able to support a greater variety of plants, which will create hardier soil. This, with vigilance against disruption, will set in motion a reinforcing loop which will become less fragile and more self-sustaining. Eventually, a wall of sturdy life will thwart the encroaching desert.

Holistic education means nurturing a kind of "growth ecology". Influences are evaluated according to how they contribute to a "feedback loop" which generates skill and knowledge within a context of wisdom and compassion. The indispensable "park rangers" of such an effort are the educators (including parents and others without any particular teacher training) who set an example for others by their conduct. They work with the community to establish and maintain standards for human relations designed to remove fear and promote freedom. This is the fragile "soil" in which some people feel moved to make contributions of talent and energy to a community culture of learning. The satisfaction and appreciation enjoyed by some encourages others. Gradually a world of service, inquiry, artistic and linguistic expression emerges.

5. Educators Must Work on Themselves

Holistic educators may be professionals, parents, or others (those supervising in the kitchen or the garden of a residential facility, for example) who are taking on an educational role.

Because growth is an ecological process, the degree of wisdom and compassion of those in positions of leadership has a strong radiating effect on the quality of everyone's learning. Teachers' honesty, openness, service, sense of humor, and spiritual discipline set an example for everyone. So educa tors must develop their own characters and their skillfulness in working with others. This process should be both internal and collective. For this reason, friendship and trust among members of a holistic teaching team is a great advantage. Teachers should evaluate their organizational roles and structures by how well they foster mutual growth.

6. The Culture Is the Curriculum

Holistic education holds that learning content makes the most difference to our development when it is part of our cultural experience, particularly our daily life in community and our network of relationships. In fact, it holds that the purpose of knowledge and skill is to deepen our experience here and now, with the understanding that, to paraphrase John Dewey, the best preparation for the future is a rich and meaningful present.

Instead of being overly concerned about the content of any particular curriculum, holistic educators are more interested in the nature and quality of the culture for people of all ages. They ask questions like this:

How does our daily life include opportunities and demands for learning which are inherent in the needs of regularly arising situations: cooking, eating, waste disposal, exercise, dealing with conflict, traveling, playing, performing, religious practice, conversation, and so on?

How can most adults in a community, rather than a custodial few, share knowledge and skill with the young people of that community?

How can people in general, without regard to age, share knowledge and skill with each other?

Is the knowledge and skill thought valuable for the future of the young used obviously by adults (especially parents and grandparents) to enrich their cultural lives?

How can we create a variety of learning contexts for the young, besides organizing them into large age-specific groups? Can they explore on their own, play and work with kids of different ages, watch and participate alongside adults, or secure the individual attention of mentors of all ages?

Aren't there many things which a holistic enterprise might expect nearly everyone to learn? Yes, but these things are not set down and handed down as a "curriculum". Instead, effort goes into increasing the variety and quality of, and time available for, learning relationships between people of all ages (including time to be with oneself).

Within a holistic learning community, the knowledge, and skills of our ancestors become the refreshments at an ongoing lifelong party. There is no rush to get something arbitrarily "covered" by a certain age. Facts, skills, and disciplines that are in fact necessary for full participation in the culture are learned through participation in the culture. This includes intimate relationships (e.g., teenager and younger child sitting down with a book) and group activities (like building a house or producing a newspaper). Classes and other prepared study sequences are organized and chosen for the specialized purposes of some, rather than universally required measures of success or failure.

7. Respect Individual Learning Paths

Nature endows human beings with a vast variety of aptitudes and environmental influences. This variety provides a basis for cooperation and mutual respect. When I help out on an exterior painting project at the Buddhist temple, I follow the guidance of those who know more about this business than I do. When volunteer adults at the temple help me to rehearse a play with children, they follow my lead. It's natural for people to have complementary areas of relative expertise and ignorance.

Holistic education invests in a cultural network of activities and relationships in which nearly everyone can be trusted to learn what they need to enjoy further opportunities while respecting others and nature. Put another way, it is the culture which can be trusted to teach people how to, for example, read and write, control their anger, or use and understand the recycling system.

This liberates individuals to make unique and widely varied contributions within a cooperative social framework. We should value everyone for whatever it is that they do know, or can do, or are good at, that benefits others. People who have a great aptitude for anything help, teach, and enrich the lives of those who have less. It is this very quality, even more than a universally shared body of ritual, symbolic, or factual knowledge, which, from a holistic standpoint, makes a culture most worthy of perpetuation.

When people are secure in themselves and their place in the community, they can be persuaded to try their hand at things for which they have supposedly little aptitude, and at different points throughout their lives. I always thought I was no good at fixing things, but since I have been involved in small projects at the temple, watching what materials and tools experienced people use, I've been less shy about taking up small challenges around my apartment.

When all people are allowed to construct a sense of intellectual, social, and creative self-worth based on their individually varied aptitudes and interests, then language, science, history, and mathematics can take their natural place alongside and integrated with other aspects of daily life, without being markers of superiority. When people who are best at writing and people who are best at making tools are not separated by irrelevant distinctions, they can mutually influence each other's cultural world in the fullest possible way.

8. Respect Community

It is difficult to put holistic ideals into practice without giving priority to the development of some level of community, however slight at first (always remembering that first cryptobiotic soil!). The development of our individuality relies on community, on a network of relationships built upon loving kindness and compassion. The commitment to creating and maintaining community helps to liberate us from the constant need to protect the ego, to gain some narrow advantage, to defend oneself against others. It also enlists cooperative support for any goals we have which have the potential to contribute to others. This frees us to discover ourselves, and to bring our potential to fruition.

Community provides a tempering influence on our egocentric tendencies. Rather than receiving information on our behavior from a single authority, we get a wider "reality check" with respect to how what we do and say affects others. To the extent that people share community labor, they get a chance to try out a wide variety of tasks over time. Also, when many people are helping with general tasks, it gives us more time for our own specialized pursuits.

Thus a holistic perspective does not see it as an infringement of someone's freedom to expect him or her to contribute to the community, as long as everyone has equal access to the process of deciding what the expectations will be. Sometimes the contribution may be one in which the individual's unique qualities are less important: everyone has to run outside and get the clothes off the line before the storm hits. Or else it may border on the eccentric: strange sculptures in the garden, or bizarre poems sent home from faraway lands. Seen over the long term, each kind of contribution has its season. Common discussion reveals what the community needs from each person, and what each person has to offer.

When a community makes decisions so as to give everyone a voice, no matter how old, then opportunities are multiplied for everyone's exercise of wisdom and compassion. A democratic approach increases respect for the community by making it clear that "the will of the community" is not just a code phrase for the will of a few dominant individuals.

9. Balancing Individuality and Community is What Calls Forth Compassion and Wisdom

By discovering and rediscovering their own proper balance of personal autonomy and social alignment, individuals in a community grow to understand each other and their life together. Prior agreements on this score can be useful, but they should not be used to avoid all conflict, and the learning adventure that comes with it.

If each person's desires were always identical with what promoted peace and happiness for all members of the community, then there would be no need to exercise wisdom or compassion. But sometimes people tell lies, use force, leave dishes in the sink, and so on. Sometimes people put the reputation and integrity of the community at risk through selfish actions. On the other hand, sometimes the community creates so many taboos and restrictions that individual expression is stifled, and fear of criticism dominates the scene.

A holistic approach includes dealing with conflict between individuals, and between the individual and the community, as part of a whole education. It sees each instance as an opportunity to increase awareness of self and also of our interdependence with others. This creates a universal context for the varying content of interpersonal conflicts. Even if the people most caught up in the content of the conflict can't see the forest for the trees at that moment, they can rely upon others who are more detached to do so. Thus the cultivation of a community with the capacity for open dialogue based on mutual respect has a great conditioning influence on particular conflicts which arise. It serves as a reservoir of compassion and wisdom upon which everyone can draw.

10. Aim Towards Leaving No One Out

Holistic education does not rank or sort people by comparing them to each other or to some fixed, narrow set of criteria. Nor does it seek some artificially imposed equality wherein those most qualified to fulfill some function or exercise leadership in a given area are held back so that others less able do not feel slighted. Both points of view stem from arrangements in which honor, respect, and well-being are scarce commodities, reserved for those who make it to the "top", or at least the "middle".

Within the context of a holistic learning community, education proceeds from the calling forth of individual capacities in service to others through the construction of an intelligent culture. Individual development and collective effort go hand-in-hand within such a "growth ecology". Each person is seen as needed, as having something to offer. Sometimes even the most difficult personalities provide useful challenges to the compassion and wisdom of the community! The community cannot afford to waste anyone; it's in its interest to find a way to include everyone.

This may take time. Following our ecological model, no community that wishes to found itself upon open dialogue and free expression can start off by including the full range of personalities who exist on this planet: it will disintegrate.

On the other hand, communities, as well as the individuals involved, may benefit by including a certain number of people who place greater demands on the group. The wisdom and compassion that grows when the strong protect and care for the weak cannot get much exercise in a group which only includes the strong. It is also possible to design communities from the start with certain kinds of members in mind: the sick, the aged, the emotionally disturbed, and so on.

Discerning the point at which variety stretches the fabric of community past a healthy balance is a matter for wise and compassionate deliberation in each case. Each community, following this underlying principle, must find its own way. There is no single perfect model which is right for everyone.

The principle of leaving no one out conditions how evaluation is used. We need to evaluate each other and ourselves in order to know whether each of us has the skill, knowledge, compassion, and wisdom to use a particular set of responsibilities, privileges, and opportunities in a way that will promote growth for themselves and others.

But evaluation should not limit anyone's opportunity to use his or her capacities to the fullest, or to be recognized and supported as a whole, complex, worthy being with unique qualities to contribute to the community. When this is not at stake, evaluation can become far more honest and mutual. Those being evaluated can get straight feedback from others, at the same time that they cultivate their own self-honesty and patience. The principle of leaving no one out, rather than avoiding evaluation, strives to remove irrelevant fears from the process, thus encouraging greater respect for it as a learning tool in itself.

A holistic context encourages forms of evaluation which are integrated with the student's daily life, and his or her personal relationship with teachers and others. One is the completion of complex deeds or projects which, in addition to their intrinsic value, demonstrate the precise kinds of competence one will need in one's new role. The other is the testimony of those who have closely observed someone in prior situations. Through documenting one's deeds in some organized way, and similarly compiling one's references, one should be able to satisfy the need for evaluation on the part of those outside as well as inside the community.

The principle of leaving no one out conditions our use of competition in the same way. There is no problem with making moderate use of competition to stimulate creativity, fun, exertion, and growth in general. Problems arise when competition becomes the context for education (or economics), the dominant motivating factor. When competition is used wisely and compassionately, within a larger context of cooperation, it does not put anyone's essential material or social well-being at risk. People are free to gain just as much in wisdom and experience by losing as by winning. The community is careful not to glorify winners so much as to obscure the true glory that comes from sincere effort and mutual respect on the part of everyone.

"Leaving no one out" completes the circle of holistic thinking that began with our dedication to wisdom and compassion as the basis for all other learning. It means no one is

outside the ecosystem of growth, participation in a full human life, and respect for his or her individual nature. It is to orient ourselves towards this goal that we educate ourselves and our children.

10 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

I ask the reader to forgive the absence of scholarship in this article. As an acknowledgment of the various inspirations for it, I offer this personal reading list. It is by no means a bibliography for the holistic education field.

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The following editorial was reprinted from a new periodical,* Touch the Future, *put out by Michael Mendizza and Suzanne Arms in collaboration with Joseph Chilton Pearce, a blockbusting group dedicated to drawing the attention of families to the appalling implications of our society's growing dependence on the inventions of technology, particularly in the incredibly sensitive and vulnerable areas of pregnancy, birth, infancy and children's education. They also have two videos, one made from a talk by Pearce on the findings of brain research as they apply to birth and child development, the other a dialogue between Suzanne Arms and Dr. David Chamberlain on the staggering awarebess of the growing baby both inside and outside the uterus. We reviewed both of these videos in the* Journal of Family Life, *issue Spring, (I)3, on Birth.

Touch the Future —

Unfolding New Capacities in Ourselves and in our Children
Summer, 1995

> *Artists tell us where we are going long before the sociologists and psychologists catch the drift. Is it a coincidence that so much of the art created by young people is dark, much darker than ever before—and at a time when our technical strength has never been greater?*

I hate to be the one to break the news but television and computer technology has done little to expand our sensitivity, nurture visionary imagination or solve our deepening personal and global challenges. Oh, I know, you only watch PBS and use computers just to write letters and balance the checkbook...

We, and the world we have created are being changed by these technologies. The vast spectrum of human potential is narrowing. Personal, cultural and biodiversity is being homogenized into a tightly spinning whirlpool of mechanical sameness. What we think, how we feel, the quality of light and sound which touches us, our sensitivity, our relationships, the language and symbols we use to shape to our dreams, our perception—the fragile foundation of our reality is being altered, dare I say diminishing? And through this fading window we look hoping to find some meaning, some enduring purpose to believe in. And this slipping, sliding, changing reality is even more challenging for children. Most of us older folks are kinda numb after so many spins around the barn. But the psyche of our children is not as tough. The imprints are stronger, they penetrate deeper.

Artists tell us where we are going long before the sociologists and psychologists catch the drift. Is it a coincidence that so much of the art created by young people is dark, much darker than ever before— and at a time when our technical strength has never been greater?

Push aside the illusion of content and look at the sensory experience implicit in these technologies. Yes, things move around the screen, but as Neil Postman points out in *Amusing Ourselves to Death,* when we watch television and computers, what we are actually watching is the screen. Political pundits in California are hoping to spend 500 million dollars on computers for schools. Who could question such a proposal? Computers have become synonyms with quality education and jobs. Ya-right? Between 1960 and 1992 the US tripled the number of constant dollars given to public schools. Yet, after 12,000 hours of compulsory schooling at the hands of nearly 100 government certified men and women, of those that do graduate, many have no significant job skills and even less hope. The promise of full employment is a cruel hoax. According to Hazel Henderson, "the 1980's was an era of *jobless economic growth* due to continued capital intensity and automation." Populations and economies are growing but there are fewer jobs. Theodore Roszak calls the urban-industrial society, and its mental equivalent, the diminishing dimensions of human consciousness, a wasteland. "If the spirit within withers, so too will the world we build about us." We must educate and nurture the whole human being, but there remains too precious few who understand what this means. To inspire our children only enough to become well conditioned cogs that turn the industrial/technological wheels is a waste none of us can afford.

—Michael Mendizza

rite to:

Touch the Future
A Non-Profit Learning Design Center
4350 Lime Avenue, Long Beach California 90807
(310) 426-2627; Fax (310) 427-8189

COMPUTERS IN EDUCATION

Joseph Chilton Pearce and Michael Mendizza attended a three-day symposium examining the use of computers in elementary and secondary education. ...The results and recommendations from that meeting will be published by them in the near future.

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This wry, tongue-in-cheek piece (at least, I hope it is!) from out of the homeschooling community comes from the FLEx (Family Learning Exchange) *newsletter. Chris did a review of this attractive, informative periodical in the last ΣΚΟΛΕ. He liked it! Me too. 6 issues a year for $15, or $3.50 per issue. Write them at PO Box 300, Benton City, WA 99320. This is one of their regular columns.*

NOTES FROM NANCY:

OLIVER LEARNING TO READ

by Nancy Dodge

Oliver is the fourth of five wonderful, exuberant children. As the fourth, he feels a certain peer pressure to read slightly ahead of the normal "My child didn't read until he was 26 and I'm proud of it" unschooler schedule. He's now five, going on six, and feels he needs to read as much as he needs scrambled eggs for breakfast and a regular dose of Nintendo at least twice weekly.

The anal part of me, the part that would be an excellent school teacher some day, wants desperately to sit him down all comfy and use wQrk books, or at least the phonics lessons we made up for the first few Dodge readers in our family."A-B-C-D-E-F-G" (I can smell freshly sharpened #2 pencils even as I write this!)

The proud "My child read at 12 and what are you going to say ahout it" part of me knows that I not only have to lie back, I should ACTIVELY discourage Oliver from reading now, or perhaps ever! Our Non-Structuralist Honor is at stake.

Maybe, hmmm....let me think about this...maybe I can discourage him from reading EVER! That would give us something to brag about at the Dodge family wedding this summer, to be sure.

"Oh, we've decided to follow the Aversion method of Non-Education, and we are showing him ugly and scary pictures from the Family Learning Exchange whenever he "shows any interest in the printed word!"!

My mother-in-law, as you can imagine, would be delighted. Her Eldest Son, my children's uncle, the public school advocate extraordinaire, would have something to brag about. As a matter of fact, maybe he would take HIS children OUT of school and follow our Aversion Method with his own kids!

About three weeks ago, we were in Pyramid Books. For those of you who don't have a Pyramid Books in your local shopping center, it is a wonderful store that has all paperbacks for half price. Some are new, some aren't. You pretty much have to take what they get, and for the most part they get lots of good stuff.

Oliver fell in love with a teenage space thriller techno-romance novel thing, and tried to convince me that he CAN read well enough for me to buy it for him. I gently refused, feeling rather smug about our new copy of Black Beauty, 'Gunga Din and Other Favorite Poems of Rudyard Kipling', and 'The Big Paperback Book of Science Experiments You Can Do with Only What You Find on the Bathroom Floor'.

In front of the store owner, God, the woman looking at cook books, and everybody, Oliver announced loudly that he WOULD know how to read if I would just stop working at the computer all the time and showing him all of those ugly and scary pictures and TEACH him something about reading. .

I'll admit that the schoolish part of me was mortified. However, soon enough the MRU (Militant Rabid Unschooler) kicked in and I smiled at him, bought him a wordless comic book, let him have a piece of the hard candy that they give away at the checkout, and left the store.

I trust in the Aversion Method. Why? I don't know—I haven't actually seen it WORK yet, but I have faith.

Now, for Oliver's little sister, Addie, let's see...maybe I can grind up alphabet blocks in the food processor and feed them to her in a bottle once a day...

Late Summer, 1995

POEM:

Dear Mary,

After a visit to the Sudbury Valley School in Framingham, Mass., a couple of years ago, it became painfully clear to me that young children desperately want autonomy to shape their own existence and that compulsory schools systematically rob them of this experience. Luckily, schools like Sudbury and your Free School are working to change that.

As a songwriter, I felt the need to put my feelings down in the words of a song. I'm sending you the lyrics of a song I wrote called "My World". It tells of the struggle for autonomy through the eyes of a child. If you like, I can send you a tape with the recorded song. Keep up the great work and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,
Lee Kweller

MY WORLD

Why don't they let me live my own life
Why can't I sit behind the wheel
Why don't they let me go it alone
Don't they know how I feel?

They set the rules,
It's a game I must play,
All I want are the tools
Then get out of my way

It's MY WORLD
I don't want to escape it
So please let me shape it... I can
In your world you can do what you want to
But just don't hang on to MY WORLD

Why do I sit in a stadium seat
Watchin' the action go by
Why can't I try on these new pair of wings
Kick the door open and fly?

All fantasy
Someone else's design
Time to turn off TV
And to make my life shine

It's MY WORLD
I don't want to escape it
So please let me shape it... I can
In your world you can do what you want to
But just don't hang on to MY WORLD

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You can write Lee at Koala Music, 24 Carhart Ave., White Plains, NY 10605. Thanks, Lee.

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REVIEWS:

VOICES of the emerging generation
a two week poetry writing unit

written and developed by Patricia Webb
Published by Realistic Living Press, 1994
Rt. 3 - Box 104-A5,Bonham, TX 7541
(903) 583-8252
Reviewed by Charlene Therrien

Charlene Therrien has been teaching in the Free School in Albany, New York, since the early eighties A poet in her own right, Charlene's favorite activity is co-creating poetry with children—which she has done both in the school and in annual summer workshops in the nearby area. Her students' poems have won prizes in several poetry contests, and some have appeared both here and in **ΣΚΟΛΕ, the Journal of Alternative Education.**

This course is a potentially very valuable tool. It is well thought out and based for the most part on a sound point of view regarding people. I say that because my own experience has made it clear to me that, along with my love of poetry, it is my love of the poetic in life and in people that has made the difference in my ability to "teach" poetry. This truth is put forth in the opening statement of purpose which says that what is needed to teach this unit is specifically, "a belief in your students, an appreciation of the validity of their life experience, an ability to delight in their unique perceptions, and a trust in their desire to express themselves." Amen.

Everything else is supplied in a very organized, clear and attractive way. There are two light blue spiral bound books, the first of which contains ten lessons which could be used "as is" if you are really completely new at this and which at the least contain wonderful ideas for avenues of expression. Where you would operate on this spectrum has a lot to do with the kids you are working with and their own level of self -belief, trust etc. The presentation is very encouraging to the teacher and has step by step instructions which emphasize "poetry as fun" as well as "poetry as a discipline" giving concrete examples and models for putting the material across in a way that works to draw students into the magic.

The second is poetry written by students in grades three through eleven along with photos and a bit about each of them. This gives the kids a chance to see how they themselves might be published and to relate to other kids who have written poetry. I don't ágree that this is necessary in order to get kids to write poetry but I don't think it can hurt either. And it is very beautifully done.

This unit deals with everything from poetic form and a definition of poetry to publishing and performing—which could be really helpful to someone who wants to introduce children to poetry but who, again, doesn't feel confident or well enough informed to launch out without guidance. Certainly the spirit encouraged by the teachers' guide is open-hearted and accepting.

The only thing that I take exception to is an expressed belief that young children will not be interested in adult poetry. I have been reading everything from Shakespeare to Millay to Nash to anything I get my hands on that is pleasing in whatever way, to kids five years and up, for about thirteen years now. Even if they don't understand many of the words I find that they often get the point and understand the content on some level. I have been amazed myself at times at just how much they get. They enjoy the sounds and cadences—and anyone with any dramatic sense can cash in on that. It does help to be familiar with poetry both from the reading aloud standpoint and for finding and choosing a variety of interesting material. But that part is totally up to you, so no problem.

On the whole I would recommend this course to anyone who has the desire to create a space for their students to discover the joy of writing poetry.

Small Journal Reviews:

by Chris Mercogliano

Skipping Stones is a bimonthly multicultural children's magazine out of Eugene, Oregon. Funded by several major foundations, it is a highly attractive and very readable publication whose stated mission is to "...encourage cooperation, creativity and celebration of cultural and linguistic diversity... (and) to explore and learn stewardship of the ecological web which sustains us."

My review copy was a recent issue entitled, "Connecting with the Earth, youth speak out about the environment." Its thirty-six pages contained a number of excellent articles, stories, letters, drawings and poems written by children all the way from Eugene to Papua, New Guinea. There was also an interesting interview with three local junior high school students trying to get at the heart of the looming ecological crisis as they see it.

Included in each issue is an environmental news page, a children's write-in column, an international recipes section, book reviews, a guide for parents and teachers (which, being both a parent and a teacher, I instinctively skipped), and a very extensive pen pal directory (which costs $5.00, but which is available free to low-income individuals). [Note: see a few pages of their Pen Pal list on page 40 of this issue of ΣΚΟΛΕ.]

I particularly like the fact that *Skipping Stones* is available at 50% off the regular subscription price of $18.00 to those who cannot afford it. There's putting your money where your mouth is in terms of fostering true cultural diversity.

Subscriptions can be had by sending a check to:

Skipping Stones
PO Box 3939
Eugene, OR 97403
(503) 342-4956

* * * *

The premiere issue of the **F.U.N. (Family Unschoolers Network) NEWS** came our way a while back. A ten-page reader participation newsletter produced by the Greer family in Pasadena, MD (not California), this issue focused on the different styles of homeschooling which have emerged over the past several years. The Greers believe that learning should be fun for the whole family, and so they practice what they term "unschooling." In order to define the term for readers, they included in their opening editorial the preamble from the portfolio which they presented to their local school officials last year:

> Our primary purpose in homeschooling is to keep alive the spark of curiosity and the natural love of learning with which all children are born. We want children to

accept learning as a natural consequence of living, and an ongoing incremental process that continues throughout life. We want their learning to remain an integrated process in which all subjects are interrelated. We also want to allow them the time to to pursue a subject as fully as they want, rather than imposing artificial time constraints on them. We believe these aspects of learning are limited by the traditional implementation of a curriculum, and we choose to homeschool as a way to circumvent those limitations by not imposing a traditional curriculum.

And let us say Amen. Anyone wishing to support this new publication should send $6.00 to:

Family Unschoolers Network
1688 Belhaven Woods Ct.
Pasadena, MD 21122-3727
(Free sample copies are available upon request.)

Last minute submission! This children's writing properly belongs in the first section of the journal but that would mean reformatting the whole issue—two days of work, really—and since our printer lately has begun taking up to six weeks to print our journals, we're going to be stuck with a fall issue you don't get till winter!

But I did need to include these poems from **Καλεπαεδεια** *House near Ithaca, New York. The kids sent us wonderful essays on various ecological subjects last spring, which we published in that issue—and there are as many more again for the next spring issue, plus some lovely pictures! Elisabeth Forbush, their coordinator, writes that the children chose them from their literary journal* **Μνημοσψνη**, *volume 5, (Spring, 1995). She adds, "... I'll let you see if you can identify the title as well as you did our name. ... [Memory? No, I didn't look it up!] I should tell you that there is MUCH MORE where this comes from, including LONG rhyming narrative poems with prologues in imitation of Canterbury Tales."*

Thanks, kids. You are truly delightful poets and illustrators as well as very persuasive environmental advocates and essayists! Wish I could have published them all! Maira, Rebecca, Liza, your were hand-written, so I didn't have time. But I will next spring. Promise! Also your drawings.

Two by Monica Nash, 9

A Mouse

There is a curious mouse
that breaks out of his house,
And finds himself alone in the cold
With no toys for him to hold.

He finds a fern,
(which the name of he had yet to learn.
He finds an old cherry under a tree-
He looks for more cherries,
but all he finds is debris.

He goes into an old hole
That belonged to a mole,
And curls up into a ball
For the rest of the fall.

The Tree

There was once a small tree
(That would soon be debris).
On it were some small
mushrooms.
It had plenty of rooms
(For the bugs)
With lots of mugs.
Each room was so small
(It could not fit them all).
It was so small, but they
said, "So?"
until it started to fall—
Then they all said, "No!"

Two by Timmy Maragni, 13

A Winter Night

A white blanket covers the ground
And no earth can be found.
Zillions of crystals shine in the night,
Silently reflecting the quiet moon's light.
All is silent as the stars shine bright,
Filling the air with heavenly light.

A Spring Day

The sun rises o'er green grassy ground;
The sky is blue—not a cloud can be found.
Gloom doesn't exist, neither far nor near
For everything knows that spring is here.

Very merry people roam
Walking slowly through grass and loam,
Wandering, pondering in the warm air,
merely strolling without a care.

Birds sing happily in a tree;
I hear the joyful buzz of a bee.
The robins are back home once more,
and bluebirds sing by my door.

The streams are high and the wind does sigh
as the sun climbs higher in the sky
The buzzard soars on graceful wings,
And the happy thrush joyfully sings.

The sun lowers toward the west
And this spring day is the very best.
I feel the air cooler get,
But the sun has not yet set.

The sky is lit from fire in the west,
For this sunset is the best.
Below the trees the bright orange glides,
Extinguishing the fire in the western sky.

From the east rises a silver dime
Lighting this night that is so fine.
The scene is now as bright as day,
As an owl swoops over the fields of hay.

The night goes on as I go to bed,
Even though dreams fleet through my head.

Two by Saren Seeley, 8

African Desert

In an African desert
sands sparkle like a
fancy pencil.

The moonshine reflects
on the sands like
thousands of gems.

A snake slithers across
the desert (gems) sands.

A cactus holds water
from a small pond.

Wonderful Earth

Wonderful
It gives us homes

Round
Light and dark
Not Dirty
Bird Eggs
Active (because of
Round volcanos)
Beautiful
Happy harp seals.

One by Alexa Raine Wright, 6

The Hearts Were out

The hearts were out.
The girl was out
because she loved hearts.
The bird came out to sing to the girl.
The girl and the bird were happy,

For the bird loved to sing,
And the girl loved to listen.

And when the hearts were out,
it made everything happier.

Two by Isaac Furbush-Bayer, 15

Alliterative Activities

Pushing up through puffy padded
leaves
Coming through the clods of cold
clumpy dirt
Sliding through slippery sulphur soil
Sailing through the sea of slimy,
slippery, scaly snakes.

Green grass growing gigantic
Gargantuous in the slight
light of the sun.
Jumping through the jungle of
Jiggling swaying swirling
Green growing grass.
The snow slides smoothly
Landing on the large lemon
tree
Growing larger with every
small
Silky shiny shimmery sinking
snowflake.

The Violinist

The violinist nestles into
the violin like a pillow;
then comes the first note—
pure and clean—
it sails out, out into the
crisp clear air.

Two by May Brinn-Beers, 11

The Castle

Tall, bright,
And gleaming white:
This is the castle by the sea.

Every tower is so high,
Each one reaching up to the
sky;
This is the castle by the sea.
The silver moon makes it shine;
It shines so bright I wish it
were mine:
this is the castle by the sea.

Here I sit on the grassy hill,
Watching the castle ever so still,
Watching the castle by the sea.

Night

Shining stars shimmering up
above,
Sorrow and sadness have gone
with the soft call of the dove.

Small animals burrow deep beneath
the ground;
Bears heave their big broad chest
Without a sound
Mothers sing lullabies to their children
as they lazily lie
And so they peacefully pass into sleep
Without a single cry.

—May Brinn-Beers, 11 and
Rebecca Furbush-Bayer, 12

Two by Sophie Brown, 6

Dream Catchers

Dream Catchers catch
good dreams for you.

Now will your dreams
bounce off the Dream Catcher

and into your head.

World

Wise lizard
O n
R e
L rivers
D g
e
t
i
c

Two by Lauren Cahoon, 12

Natchiagruk

Sweet child!
You look at me with starry eyes,
little Natchiagruk.
Soft, snow-white fur,
may you be happy
with your nurturing
mother.
Sweet child!

Owl Shadows

Coal black eyes,
downy breast—
Barred owl.
"Who cooks for you?
Who cooks for you
aall?"
you call to your mate
by squawking.
He alights nearby.
"Who cooks for you?
Who cooks for you
aaall?"
Together you glide,
two dark phantoms,
across the clearing.
Quiet wings.
"Who cooks for you?
Who cooks for you
aaalll?"
Talkative shadows
on silent wings,
"Who? Who? Who
cooks for you?
Who cooks for you
aaaall?"

One by Moses Wilks, 10

Eagle

I am the wind
Gentle breeze or wild
tornado
I am as wise
As one hundred years
I am black and white

Good and bad mixed together
I am the sky
Peaceful blue, lightning anger
I am loyalty
Never telling secrets
I am an eagle
Swooping down on what I want

One by Lindsey Cahoon, 9

Icicles

Icicles sparkle
in winter
and are cold.

When I was walking
the icicles seemed
like dragons' teeth.

When I was passing
the icicles seemed
like stalactites.

One by Jonathan Maragni, 9

Learning About Bark

Bark is the tree's coat
            the tree's home
            the tree's, suit
            the tree's protection.
Bark is light
            and thin.

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